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**THE CODEX AMIATINUS, THE BOOK OF KELLS
AND ANGLO-SAXON ART**

Jennifer O'Reilly



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Dr Jennifer O'Reilly

(1943–2016)

Dr Jennifer O'Reilly lectured on medieval history in University College Cork between 1975 and her retirement in 2008. Her scholarly interests and publications lay principally in three areas: the iconography of early Irish and Anglo-Saxon art, the writings of Bede the Venerable and Adomnán of Iona, and the *Lives* of Thomas Becket. In these areas she explored the intimate relations between medieval texts and images and the traditions of biblical exegesis shaped by the Church Fathers. Her teaching inspired generations of students, many of whom went on to complete doctorates under her supervision. In retirement she continued to write extensively, and she gave numerous public lectures, including the Jarrow Lecture and the Brixworth Lecture. She was a Member of the Royal Irish Academy and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Her collected essays are published in the Variorum series in three volumes: *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*; *Early Medieval Text and Image 1: The Insular Gospel Books*; *Early Medieval Text and Image 2: The Codex Amiatinus, the Book of Kells and Anglo-Saxon Art*.

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PREFACE

When she died in 2016, Jennifer O'Reilly left behind a body of published work in three areas of medieval studies: the iconography of the manuscript art produced in early medieval Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England; the writings of Bede and his older Irish contemporary, Adomnán of Iona; and the early lives of Thomas Becket. In these three areas she explored the connections between historical texts, artistic images and biblical exegesis. This book brings together her studies of the Codex Amiatinus, the Book of Kells and Anglo-Saxon art. It is one of three volumes of her collected essays published in the Variorum series. The others are *Early Medieval Text and Image: The Insular Gospel Books and History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*. In each volume endnotes have been converted in to footnotes, and the pagination of the original publications is indicated in the text by bold numbers within square brackets.

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INTRODUCTION

Word, Image and Imagination: The Scholarly Writings of Jennifer O'Reilly

The Venerable Bede opens the first prologue to his commentary *On the Temple* with the following citation: 'Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction so that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope' (Romans 15:4).¹ In the passage that follows Bede explains how the reward of heaven is secured by those who have patience in the face of adversity; consolation is found by meditation on the Scriptures and on the fate of the eminent Fathers, 'bright luminaries of the Church', who bore much 'dark affliction' during their earthly lives but were rewarded with both heavenly glory and unflinching praise and fame among the faithful. Bede's sentiments reflect many of the concerns that occupied Jennifer O'Reilly throughout her scholarly life. The volumes of her collected essays demonstrate her profound engagement with how medieval writers and artists meditated on 'whatever was written in former days' in order to understand the experience and purpose of the darkness and light of Christian life, and how they expressed this understanding in words and images. On a more personal level, Bede's sentiments reflect the steadfastness and hope which characterised how Jennifer O'Reilly lived her own life, something that this series of volumes also bears witness to, albeit in a more implicit way.

The seventeen chapters included in this book (Volume 2) comprise some of Jennifer O'Reilly's first published articles and several of her final ones, written over a period of almost forty years. The volume is divided into three parts. The first two of these focus on specific manuscripts: there are four chapters on the Codex Amiatinus and seven chapters on the Book of Kells. The final part of the book contains six

1 Bede, *De templo, Prologus*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119 A (Turnhout 1969), p. 143; *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. S. Connolly (Liverpool 1965), p. 1. The Latin citation reads: *quaecumque enim scripta sunt ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt ut per patientiam et consolationem scripturarum spem habeamus*. Jennifer O'Reilly's study of *Bede: On the Temple* is included in one of the companion volumes, *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, which for the purposes of this Introduction is referred to as companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*. A further volume, *Early Medieval Text and Image 1: The Insular Gospel Books* is referred to as Volume 1. The current volume is referred to as Volume 2. Chapters are referred to by these titles and chapter numbers. Page references are to the page numbers in these volumes rather than to those in the original publication.

chapters that cover, by contrast, a broad chronological and geographic range, from the art of the tenth-century Benedictine reform in England to the iconography of the Trees of Eden in European art from Late Antiquity to the Reformation. Despite their different emphases, the seventeen chapters have much in common, both with each other and with those of the two companion volumes. They have overlapping subject matter and are founded on a shared methodology. Each of them, in turn, offers a glimpse of their author's passionate and imaginative engagement with the intellectual and spiritual life of early medieval Europe.

The present introduction aims to convey to readers a sense of Jennifer O'Reilly's approach to understanding the cultural history of the Middle Ages. It outlines the central role of teaching in the development of her ideas and brings her methodology and key influences into relief. It finally explores, briefly, some of the themes evident throughout the collected works, with an emphasis on their expression in the chapters in this volume. While thus specific to this book, it acts as a complement to the consideration of Jennifer O'Reilly's writings on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket that introduces the first volume, and the detailed discussion of her essays on Insular art that opens the second.²

Teaching and writing

Jennifer O'Reilly joined the staff of the History Department at University College Cork in 1975 and taught there until her retirement in 2008. For many of her students, myself included, it was her enthusiasm, underpinned by a personal warmth, an elegance and a mischievous wit, which led to a first vital connection with the cultural landscape of the Middle Ages. A first-year survey course on the coming of Christianity to Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England was followed by second-year options on Insular manuscripts, on Bede and on Thomas Becket, and a final-year research seminar on 'The Coming of the Book'. What is remarkable now, looking back, is the ease with which, as students, we were invited into a way of understanding this oftentimes opaque primary source material. This ease rested on Jennifer O'Reilly's abilities as a teacher, an aspect of her scholarly life that is difficult to convey, yet which was crucial to the working out of many of the ideas that appear in published form in this book and its companions.

While many of her insights were first articulated in the classroom, their careful and comprehensive expression in written form illustrates a striking aspect of Jennifer O'Reilly as a scholar – namely the contrast between how she taught and how she wrote. While both modes of discourse were based on profound erudition, her teaching provided, at least initially, 'milk of more easy doctrine'.³ Although

2 See Máirín MacCarron and Diarmuid Scully, 'Introduction', companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, and Carol A. Farr, 'Introduction', Volume 1.

3 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, III.5. See the discussion of this passage by Jennifer O'Reilly in her 'Introduction' to *Bede: On the Temple*, pp. xlv–xlv, companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, Chapter 1, pp. 3–35.

some of the chapters in these volumes contain didactic, explanatory passages, the complexity of many of the textual and visual images being discussed makes the published work sometimes difficult to access. The experience of working with Jennifer O'Reilly as a postgraduate student centered on learning how to understand these complex images, a process that required the development of *patientia*, the virtue which Bede commended in the citation that began this introduction and whose medieval reception was the focus of much of Jennifer O'Reilly's own early research.⁴

Methodology and influences

Jennifer O'Reilly graduated with a BA in History from the University of Nottingham in 1964. After being awarded the Diploma in Education with Distinction in the Department of Education of the University of Oxford in 1965, she returned to Nottingham to carry out doctoral studies under the supervision of Professor Alastair Smart in the Department of Fine Art and Dr Bernard Hamilton in the Department of History. Her thesis, 'Studies in the Iconography of the Virtues and Vices', was submitted for examination in 1972; it was later published as part of a Garland Series of *Outstanding Theses in the Fine Arts from British Universities*. It clearly conveys the interdisciplinary nature of its author's approach. In the Introduction the work is described as 'not strictly a piece of art history or literary history but a historical study of the presentation of specific concepts through changing images'.⁵

The thesis begins with an examination of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, a Late Antique work that was a significant textual and visual starting point for the medieval representation of the moral life of each individual. Drawing on a vast quantity of sources beginning in Late Antiquity and concluding with the works of Erasmus and the early Lutherans, it highlights the interplay between the discussion of the virtues and vices in various textual genres (poetry, theology and didactic tracts) and their visual representation in a range of media (architecture, tapestries, ivories and manuscripts). It examines how the themes evident in the *Psychomachia* were transmitted and transformed over the course of a millennium, exploring the extent to which there was continuity of tradition in the artistic and literary representations of the struggles of the interior life.

The argument presented in the thesis draws on three strands of scholarship to create the distinctive approach that Jennifer O'Reilly developed and refined over the course of her later publications. The first strand is the recognition of the significance of Late Antiquity as a period of cultural creativity and change. Responding to the reception of the *Psychomachia* by both classical scholars and literary

4 See Jennifer O'Reilly, *Studies in the Iconography of the Virtues and Vices in the Middle Ages*, Garland Series of *Outstanding Theses in the Fine Arts from British Universities* (New York and London, 1988).

5 Ibid., p. xviii.

critics, the thesis draws attention to the ‘infrequently emphasised and sometimes neglected’ point that Prudentius was writing not just as a Roman civil servant but as a Christian.⁶ Jennifer O’Reilly’s work was alert to the echoes of the rich, energetic encounter between the classical inheritance and Judeo-Christian tradition that had occurred during the final centuries of the Roman Empire. Her knowledge of this culture was the bedrock for her appreciation of the reception and transformation of this material by Insular, Anglo-Saxon and later medieval writers and artists.

A deep understanding of the precise nature of the Christian intellectual tradition developed in Late Antiquity is the second strand of Jennifer O’Reilly’s approach that should be highlighted here. Influenced by her friendship with the historian and theologian George Every, who had drawn her attention to the work of Henri de Lubac and others on the medieval approach to reading Scripture, Jennifer O’Reilly embraced from the outset the potential of images, both verbal and visual, to have multiple interpretations.⁷ The work of Origen, the great Alexandrian exegete, whose exhortation to ‘learn to find the hidden treasure beneath the letter’ is cited early in the thesis, was a continuous point of reference in her work.⁸ Origen’s imaginative spiritual interpretation of Scripture is often the first link in the chains of textual and figural responses to particular images that are explored so thoroughly in the chapters in these volumes.⁹ The volumes also contain reflections on the significance of using *lectio divina* to understand the products of medieval culture. One example in this book occurs in the chapter on fol. 114r in the Book of Kells where the author states: ‘the present approach is concerned not with seeking a specific source or categoric meaning but [. . .] with attempting a spiritual interpretation of the kind so heavily documented in the patristic literature inherited by Insular monasticism. The inheritance was not simply of texts but of a whole method of reading and imagining’.¹⁰

The significance of medieval ways of reading and imagining to Jennifer O’Reilly’s approach dovetails with the final intellectual strand evident in her work, which relates to iconography. Carrying out much of her postgraduate research at the Warburg Institute in London, and with the encouragement of its then librarian, and later director,

6 Ibid., pp. 19–20.

7 Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l’écriture* (Lyons, 1959). For information on the life of George Every see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Every. ‘The Book of Kells, Folio 114r: A Mystery Revealed yet Concealed’, Volume 2, Chapter 5, and companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, Chapter 12, are dedicated to George Every. See also the reference to George Every in ‘The Library of Scripture’, Volume 2, Chapter 1.

8 O’Reilly, ‘Studies in the Iconography’, p. 5.

9 See for example in the companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*: ‘Bede on Seeing the God of Gods in Zion’, pp. 7–8, Chapter 3; ‘St Paul and the Sign of Jonah’, p. 5, Chapter 5; ‘The Bible as Map’, pp. 210–11, Chapter 12; and ‘Seeing the Crucified Christ’, p. 61, Volume 1, Chapter 8, p. 254. ‘The St Gall Gospels’, Volume 1, Chapter 9, pp. 301–02; ‘The Art of Authority’, Volume 2, Chapter 3, p. 81; ‘Exegesis and the Book of Kells’, Volume 2, Chapter 7, pp. 170, 179–80.

10 ‘The Book of Kells, Folio 114r’, Volume 2, Chapter 5, p. 124.

Joseph Trapp, the thesis bears the influence of some of the Warburg's most esteemed members.¹¹ Its chapters on the medieval illustrations of the *Psychomachia*, and on the representations of *patientia* and of the Trees of Good and Evil, highlight the ways that images were transformed and adapted over time and set these changes in their cultural contexts. In particular, anticipating the author's subsequent work on manuscripts like the Book of Kells, the thesis explores the transmission of visually compressed images and the representation of ideas by abstract, sometimes contrasting, symbols, something that would be described in later essays as the language of paradox.¹²

Overview and themes

The volumes in this series comprise case studies of the expression of these strands of intellectual influence in various medieval contexts. Broadly speaking, there are three groups of such studies that correspond to chronological periods in Jennifer O'Reilly's life. The final parts of both this book and a third volume, *Early Medieval Text and Image 1: The Insular Gospels*, contain the author's earliest essays that date from the 1980s to the early 1990s. These focus on the art of later Anglo-Saxon and continental manuscripts and on writings about Thomas Becket. Although Jennifer O'Reilly delivered lectures on the early medieval history of Britain and Ireland from the beginning of her appointment to University College Cork, the fruits of this work became evident only in the 1990s with the publication of the significant articles on the writings of Bede and Adomnán that are contained in the companion volume, *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*. This research created the cultural context for work on the great gospel books of the Insular world, the essays relating to which are spread across the two *Early Medieval Text and Image* volumes. While continuing to discuss manuscripts in the Irish tradition, in the final decade of her life Jennifer O'Reilly was drawn to write principally on Bede's exegetical works and on the Codex Amiatinus, the manuscript produced during Bede's lifetime in the monastery where since childhood he had taken delight in learning, teaching and writing.¹³

Although the subjects of the chapters in the volumes seem on the surface to reflect an eclectic, wide-ranging impulse on the part of their author, one which she herself often wryly acknowledged, a striking feature of the trilogy is its methodological and thematic coherence. While it is difficult to generalise about such a huge body of work, the final part of the present introduction highlights some recurrent themes. The most significant of these by far is the understanding of Scripture.

A central tenet of Jennifer O'Reilly's methodology, as noted earlier, was to attempt to read and see images, whether textual or visual, in the manner of medieval scribes

11 For initial information on Joseph Trapp see www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor-jb-trapp-300497.html and on Ernst Gombrich see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Gombrich.

12 'Celtic Art and the Gospel', Volume 2, Chapter 2, pp. 45–46; 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells', Volume 2, Chapter 7, p. 191.

13 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Epilogue. See also the description by the author of Bede's life in 'All that Peter stands for', Volume 2, Chapter 4, p. 110.

and artists; in a reflective way many of the chapters in these volumes revisit and refine the author's understanding of what this reading and seeing meant in practice. This is illustrated, for example, in the treatment of episodes in Adomnán's *Life of Columba* that feature the writing of psalters. In one passage (I.23) Baithéne, Columba's eventual successor, seeks praise for copying a manuscript in which there is only one mistake. Adomnán uses the incident to urge 'the need to pass beyond the literal text of Scripture [. . .] in order to seek its inner meaning'.¹⁴ The use of the image of writing Scripture to express how it should be read and lived is returned to in the account of Columba's final days. The story of Baithéne taking over the writing of a psalter from the dying Columba (III.33) shows his readiness to pass on as a spiritual son the understanding of Scripture he received from his spiritual father.¹⁵ Extended discussion of imagery relating to books and writing also features in chapters in this volume on the Codex Amiatinus. Bede's description in the *Commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah* of the scribe Ezra as someone who 'not only restores the sacred books but embodies patristic teaching on their spiritual interpretation' is seen as the literal articulation of the compressed portrait of the scribe writing before the *armarium* of Scripture at the opening of the Amiatinus manuscript.¹⁶

While images of reading and writing provided particularly rich instances to explore the dimensions of *lectio divina*, other themes discussed in the volumes also illuminate this process and demonstrate their author's interest not just in the monastic method of reading for its own sake, but in how it connected with the medieval understanding of the Christian life. The chapters on the theme of the Crucifixion are central to this interest. The final study in this volume identifies the multiple ways in which exegesis on the Crucifixion was reflected in representations of the trees in the Garden of Eden. It explores the tendency of medieval exegetes and artists to telescope images, so that the cosmological Tree of Life simultaneously evokes Eden, Golgotha, and the heavenly paradise, and is identified with the sacramental and mystical body of Christ.¹⁷

One of most significant chapters contained in Volume 1 is on the image of the Crucifixion in the Durham Gospels, 'the most metaphysically charged of all Insular works of art'.¹⁸ In this study Jennifer O'Reilly explores the distinctiveness of the manuscript's representation of the wounded and exalted Christ, with the inscribed

14 'The Wisdom of the Scribe and the Fear of the Lord', p. 178, companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, Chapter 9.

15 'Adomnán and the Teaching of Spiritual Sons', p. 83, companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, Chapter 10.

16 'The Library of Scripture', Volume 2, Chapter 1, p. 32. An extended discussion by the author of seeing images and what this could imply is contained in 'The St Gall Gospels: art and iconography', Volume 1, Chapter 9, pp. 320–332. On the idea of words becoming images see 'Celtic Art and the Gospel' Volume 2, Chapter 2, p. 48.

17 'The Medieval Iconography of the Two Trees in Eden', Volume 2, Chapter 17.

18 This phrase of George Henderson's is cited in the essay 'Know Who and What He Is', companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, Chapter 5, p. 141.

image presenting 'both the means of humanity's redemption and the way in which the faithful need individually to respond'.¹⁹ New insight into the image's spiritual interpretation is provided in the author's discussion of the cryptic upper inscription, whose two relative clauses 'seem intermixed in a way which perplexes the reader [...] in doing so they point to a theological mystery beyond human understanding'.²⁰

Connecting to work on the Crucifixion and to the spiritual reading of Scripture are the author's essays on the theme of the active and contemplative lives. The chapter on St John in the final section of this book focuses on depictions of the evangelist in four late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, where he is shown standing and writing beside the Cross.²¹ It identifies many of the motifs which reappear in later studies, on the decoration of the Johannine *incipit* pages in the Book of Kells, for example, and most explicitly in the chapter entitled 'St John the Evangelist: Between Two Worlds', which are published in Volume 1.²² Underlying all of these studies is exegesis, both textual and visual, that highlights John's distinctiveness among the gospel writers. This distinctiveness is based on his connection to the divine. John's spiritual understanding of Scripture becomes the model for the individual Christian soul and for the contemplative life. This takes place in the context of a long exegetical tradition exemplified visually by the depiction of John writing in mountainous landscapes or stepping up to higher places, and textually in, for example, Augustine's exhortation in his *Tractates on John*, 'Raise yourself up to the evangelist, rise to his meaning'.²³

How John's distinctiveness as an evangelist was reconciled with his place in the quadripartite gospel is a feature of a fourth theme, that of scriptural harmony. Jennifer O'Reilly first explored it in this volume's chapter on the Cluny altar, which contains a depiction of the evangelical beasts around the cross. The medieval understanding of scriptural harmony, represented both by images of the evangelical beasts and the illustration of the names of Christ, is returned to in several long chapters in Volume 1 and, in a more accessible form, in two of the short chapters on Kells included in this book.²⁴ A different visual expression of the same theme is found in the diagrams of the ordering of Scripture included in the opening quire of the Codex Amiatinus. These diagrams, the author argues, echo

19 Ibid., p. 155.

20 Ibid., p. 158.

21 'St John as a Figure of the Contemplative Life', Volume 2, Chapter 13.

22 See 'Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists', Volume 1, Chapter 4, pp. 133–140 and 'St John the Evangelist: Between Two Worlds', Volume 1, Chapter 7.

23 Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium, Tractatus* 1, 2–7, cited in 'St John as a Figure of the Contemplative Life', Volume 2, Chapter 13, p. 256, and returned to in 'St John the Evangelist: Between Two Worlds', Volume 1, Chapter 7, p. 244. See also the discussion of Johannine Exegesis in 'Bede and the Dating of Easter', pp. 13–14, companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, Chapter 7.

24 See 'Gospel Harmony and the Names of Christ', Volume 1, Chapter 3 and 'Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists', Volume 1, Chapter 4 and 'Entry on the Book of Kells, fols. 29 and 34', Volume 2, Chapter 8, and 'Two Pages from the Book of Kells', Volume 2, Chapter 9.

the sentiments of Cassiodorus, who likened the different classifications of the books of the Bible by Jerome, Augustine and the Septuagint to the evangelists, in whom faith is uniform 'though the manner of speaking divergent'.²⁵ Following the work of Patrick McGurk, the chapters on art in this volume and Volume 1 attend to how the structure and form of Insular manuscripts articulated exegetical ideas. They illustrate the coherent and consistent approach of artists and scribes to the production of gospel books, and their understanding of the unity of the fourfold text and of Scripture as a whole.

While many of the studies evidence a concern with harmony, the chapter on the Lucan genealogy in this book, interestingly, demonstrates how Insular exegetes and artists dealt with the sometimes self-contradictory and irrational components of the scriptural chains which formed the basis of their interpretation, and which it was believed 'were there to keep certain kinds of reader hungry'.²⁶ The ambiguities and paradoxes contained in an image such as that of the Temple on fol. 202v of the Book of Kells, which directly follows the Lucan genealogy, is intended to show 'the simultaneity of [such] truths as an aspect of a single truth and the continuing significance of the spiritual interpretation of the literal text for the present reader who is provided with images for *meditatio* and *imitatio*'.²⁷

The Temple which (as Bede shows us in the commentary cited at the beginning of this introduction) offers an image of the body of Christ, the universal Church and its individual members, provides a fitting link to a final theme. This centres on the ways that medieval scribes and artists, situated on isles at the edge of the known world, related to their place within the Church and the traditions which they inherited. A notable feature of these volumes is how the chapters continuously interweave the sometimes quite different creative responses of Insular writers and artists to the same patristic inheritance. This is evident most clearly in the way in which Adomnán's *Life of Columba* is read in relation to Bede's work, or in the discussion of the visual exegesis of the Book of Kells and the Codex Amiatinus. It also finds a parallel in the author's treatment in various essays of the controversy around the dating of Easter.²⁸ Following Bede and the expansive vision of *Romanitas* evident in the Codex Amiatinus, she moves the discussion of the controversy away from commentary coloured by political or national concerns; in the context of its own time, it is fundamentally a debate about the orthodox way of reading Scripture.²⁹

25 'The Library of Scripture', Volume 2, Chapter 1, p. 15.

26 'Celtic Art and the Gospels', Volume 2, Chapter 2, p. 45. 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: The Lucan Genealogy', Volume 2, Chapter 7.

27 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: The Lucan Genealogy', Volume 2, Chapter 7, p. 195.

28 See for example, in the companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, the discussion in the 'Introduction' to *Bede: On the Temple*, Chapter 1, and 'Bede on the Dating of Easter', Chapter 7.

29 "'All that Peter Stands For': The *Romanitas* of the Codex Amiatinus Reconsidered', Volume 2, Chapter 4, pp. 114–115.

INTRODUCTION

Jennifer O'Reilly's work makes clear how this orthodox understanding is one which acknowledges the spiritual significance hidden within the text of Scripture. It also makes clear the fact that 'to find such spiritual meaning in the divine word is an act of discernment requiring grace, and for most people, authoritative guidance in reading the signs'.³⁰ The chapters contained in this volume and its companions are full of the kind of authoritative guidance that is spoken of here. They provide a lasting and appropriate testament to Jennifer O'Reilly's ability to read the signs of the medieval world, a world that provided her with much joy and sustenance in the course of her life and to whose understanding she made such a unique contribution.

Elizabeth Mullins

30 'The Art of Authority', Volume 2, Chapter 3, p. 70.



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The Codex Amiatinus



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THE LIBRARY OF SCRIPTURE

Views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow

The celebrated picture of a scribe in his study in the Codex Amiatinus has long been viewed as a window into the library of sixth-century Vivarium.¹ The opening quire of the manuscript, which was produced with two sister pandects as part of the doubling of the library at Wearmouth-Jarrow during Ceolfrith's abbacy (689–716), is thought to be modelled on illustrations in one or more of the Bibles produced for Cassiodorus and described by him in his *Institutiones*. The pandect of the *vetusta translatio* which Ceolfrith brought back to Wearmouth from a visit to Rome in about 678 has often been identified with Cassiodorus's Latin Bible known as the *codex grandior*.² Many scholars have speculated that all or part of Cassiodorus's multi-volumed Bible, the *novem codices*, also reached Northumbria.

The portrait in the Amiatinus (Plate 1.1) is widely seen as derived from a commemorative frontispiece portrait of Cassiodorus in one of these Bibles, showing him engaged in his great enterprise, copying out the *codex grandior* in front of a book-cupboard containing his *novem codices*.³ Holders of this view have sought to account for the differences between the labelling of the biblical books displayed

1 Florence Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Amiatino 1 (E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, ml. 3, p. 299), fol. 5v. R. Bruce-Mitford, 'The art of the Codex Amiatinus', 1967 *Jarrow Lecture*, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, series 3, 32, 1969, pp. 1–25, at pp. 6–8 notes that an off-set from the frame of the portrait, now fol. 5v, underlies the arcade frame of the dedication page, fol. 1v. For a further description of the first gathering and review of earlier literature, see J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts, sixth to the ninth century*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, vol. 1, London, 1978, cat. 7, figs 23–27; P. Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', *Speculum* 71, 1996, pp. 827–83, with tables of present disturbed order of leaves and suggested original order.

2 *Vita Ceolfridi* (*Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*), xx, and *Historia abbatum*, xv, in C. Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Bedae: Opera Historica*, Oxford, 1896, 1, pp. 379, 394.

3 See the detailed study of Ceolfrith's pandects and the Vivarium Bibles by R. Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 76–201. Bruce-Mitford discusses the interpretation of Bonifatius Fischer and Pierre Courcelle in 'The art of the Codex Amiatinus', p. 14 and in T.J. Brown and R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford *et al.*, *Evangelia quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis*, Olten-Lausanne, 1960, pp. 146–48.



Plate 1.1 The Codex Amiatinus. Scribal Portrait. MS Amiatino 1, fol. 5v. Reproduced with permission from the Laurentian Library, Florence, with the concession of the MiBAC.

in the cupboard and in three other diagrams in the Amiatinus quire, and what the *Institutiones* says of their presumed Vivarium models.⁴ In particular, scholars have tried to explain why Cassiodorus (who nowhere mentions a portrait) should have had himself portrayed in a Bible at all, let alone wearing the insignia of a Jewish high priest and with an inscription apparently identifying him with Ezra. Many now believe that the inscription is the work of Bede, but recent proposals, whether emphasising the influence of the *Institutiones* on the Amiatinus quire or denying that the text was known in Northumbria, claim that the halo and the high-priestly breastplate and tallith worn by the scribal figure were also the invention of Wearmouth-Jarrow.⁵

Among his distinguished contributions to the study of Insular art and its wider cultural context, George Henderson has defended the scribal portrait from the charge of being 'an antiquarian Insular pastiche'. He has re-emphasised the quality of the inscribed miniature as an accurate record of a sixth-century exemplar, though he questions whether that exemplar need necessarily have been [3] a portrait of Cassiodorus.⁶ The present tribute considers further how this image might have been read in Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow. This is part of a larger question. The Vulgate Codex Amiatinus differs from the *codex grandior* in text and layout, and from the *novem codices* in format. Does the opening quire's inclusion of materials drawn from one or both of these ancient books (and possibly from other sources too) simply reflect the antiquarian tastes and Romanising ideals of the Wearmouth-Jarrow community? Or does its choice or adaptation of those materials have any thematic coherence or relevance to the Vulgate pandect which the quire prefaces? An apparent anomaly, for example, is the quire's inclusion of a diagram of the Tabernacle, although Ezra lived long after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem which had replaced the desert Tabernacle.

On a magisterial scale, spanning an entire bifolium, fols. 2v–IIIr, the diagram depicts many details from the Exodus description of the Tabernacle and has analogues in Byzantine representations which preserve Late Antique stylistic features (Figure 1.1). It is generally assumed to be a copy of one of the two pictures of the Tabernacle and the Temple that Cassiodorus records having placed in the *codex grandior*. Bede had studied both of Cassiodorus's pictures, though cites only a detail from each in his own treatises, *De tabernaculo* (c. 721–25) and *De templo* (c. 729–31), as reliable aids in understanding specific physical features of the

4 Inscriptions discussed by K. Corsano, 'The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus', *Scriptorium* 41, 1987, pp. 3–34 at pp. 15–16, 22–23; Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 839–44; R. Marsden, 'Job in his place: the Ezra miniature in the Codex Amiatinus', *Scriptorium* 49, 1995, pp. 3–15, fig. 1.

5 See respectively Corsano, 'The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 15–21 and Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 831–35, 870–77.

6 G. Henderson, 'Cassiodorus and Eadfrith once again', in M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds.), *The Age of Migrating Ideas. Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, Edinburgh, 1993, pp. 82–91; G. Henderson, *Vision and Image in Early Christian England*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 87.



Figure 1.1 The Codex Amiatinus. Diagram of the Tabernacle. MS Amiatino 1, fols. 2v–IIIr. Reproduced with permission from the Laurentian Library, Florence, with the concession of the MiBAC.

biblical accounts. He believed the learned Cassiodorus had got his information on such historical matters ‘from teachers among the Jews’; and from Josephus’s *Antiquitates*.⁷ From this it has been assumed that the interest of Bede, and of the artists of the Codex Amiatinus, in accurately reconstructing the historical Tabernacle was essentially antiquarian. Bede’s acute historical interest is entirely compatible, however, with his exegetical purpose of interpreting its underlying spiritual meaning. Elaborating a long exegetical tradition in his commentary *De tabernaculo*, Bede expounded the account in Exodus 24:12–30:21 of the desert Tabernacle built by Moses at God’s command and according to a heavenly pattern.⁸ He opens by citing St Paul’s much-quoted precept that everything that happened to the Jewish people of old ‘happened to them in a figure and was written down for our instruction’ (I Corinthians 10:11). Spiritually interpreted, not only the Law but also the physical features and dimensions of the Tabernacle housing the Ark of the Covenant (in which the Law was enshrined) can reveal insights into the gospel, offering spiritual truths concerning the life of the new Chosen People, the Church, about the life of the individual believer and about eternal life.

Whether or not the Codex Amiatinus’s reconstruction of the Tabernacle is compatible with an exegetical function for the diagram will be discussed later. The exegetical tradition concerning the Tabernacle, however, does not immediately explain why the figure of Ezra should feature in the inscription over the portrait; moreover the scribe and his bookcase clearly have quite different iconographic models from the illustrations in the Byzantine Octateuchs and copies of the *Christian Topography* which offer analogues for the diagram of the Tabernacle. The scribal portrait and its thematic context in the opening quire of the Codex Amiatinus will first be considered here without reference to the Ezra [5] inscription at all. Then, after discussion of the inscription and its possible significance for interpreting the picture, attention will finally return to the portrait’s relationship with the diagram of the Tabernacle.

The Ark of the Law

The scribe’s pose and writing tools have long been recognised as deriving from a particular type of Early Christian evangelist author portrait; numerous examples, some featuring the five-legged table, are presented in Byzantine gospel books.⁹

7 Cassiodorus (ed. R.A.B. Mynors), *Institutiones*, i.5:2, Oxford, 1937, at p. 23; Bede (ed. D. Hurst), *De tabernaculo*, ii, *De templo*, ii, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 119A, Turnhout, 1969, at pp. 82 and 192–93 respectively. All references are to these editions. G. Henderson, ‘Bede and the Visual Arts’, 1980, Jarrow Lecture, Jarrow, 1981, pp. 5–6.

8 A.G. Holder, ‘The Mosaic Tabernacle in early Christian exegesis’, *Studia Patristica* 25, 1993, pp. 101–06; Bede (trans. A.G. Holder), *On the Tabernacle*, Liverpool, 1994, pp. xiii–xxv. All quotations in English are from this translation.

9 A.M. Friend Jr, ‘The portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts’, *Art Studies* 5, 1927, pp. 115–47 at pp. 134–47 and plates; *Early Christian and Byzantine Art. Exhibition catalogue*,



Figure 1.2 Ravenna, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. Reproduced with permission from Curia Arcivescovile di Ravenna-Cervia.

The pedimented book-cupboard or *armarium*, shown open and with sloping shelves originally designed for scrolls rather than codices, is also known from Late Antique works. It is often used in Jewish representations of the Torah shrine, which houses the scrolls of the Pentateuch in synagogue worship. The Torah shrine acted as an *imitatio* of the Ark of the Covenant in which the Ten Commandments of the divine Law revealed to Moses had been placed.¹⁰

These associations were used for exegetical purposes in Early Christian art, as may be the case in the ‘St Lawrence’ mosaic in the fifth-century mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, which was probably familiar to Cassiodorus (Figure 1.2). The mosaic’s subject is usually identified as St Lawrence approaching his literal [7] martyrdom, though Courcelle noted that the gridiron closely resembles the blazing grid of the holocaust altar as depicted in illustrations of the Tabernacle in Greek Octateuchs and Byzantine copies of the *Christian Topography*.¹¹ His

Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, 1947, pl. 96, pp. 98, 100; J. Merten, ‘Die Esra-Miniatur des Codex Amiatinus. Zu Autorenbild und Schreibgerät’, *Trierer Zeitschrift* 50, 1987, pp. 301–19.

10 E. Revel-Neher, *L’arche d’alliance dans l’art juif et chrétien du second au dixième siècles*, Paris, 1984, figs. 17–25; I. Schular, ‘A note on Jewish gold glasses’, *Journal of Glass Studies* 8, 1966, pp. 48–61, figs. 13, 14, 19.

11 P. Courcelle, ‘Le gril de Saint Laurent au Mausolée de Galla Placidia’, *Cahiers archéologiques* 3, 1948, pp. 29–39. J. Lowden, *The Octateuchs*, Pennsylvania, 1992, figs. 127, 128 for Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Mss. Vat. gr. 747 (fol. 108r) and Vat. gr. 746 (fol. 236v).

observation is consistent with exegesis on the Law, the Tabernacle and its ritual objects and sacrifices. In this tradition the flaming altar grid is revealed through the gospel to be a figure of the interior offering of the pure hearts of the faithful, inflamed by love of God and neighbour and by longing for the heavenly life.¹² Exegetes stressed that such ardour, however, needs to be combined with knowledge or instruction in the faith. The deacon, as the new Levite of the Tabernacle, prepared the altar and read the gospel.

Next to the grid in the Ravenna scene an open *armarium*, surmounted by a cross, discloses not Torah scrolls but four codices, labelled with the names of the four gospels. The Cross, surrounded by the symbols of the evangelists, is also depicted in the starry vault mosaic overhead. The 'St Lawrence' figure's pose, garments and open book closely parallel those of the apostolic teachers Peter and Paul in the fifth-century chancel-arch mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, where they are accompanied by the symbols of the evangelists and flank the enthroned Cross and sealed book.¹³ The Ravenna figure opens the Scriptures (cf. Luke 24:25–32), revealing how the ardent soul, instructed in the gospel's exposition of the Law, and sustained by the sacraments, may enter the heavenly Tabernacle. The *armarium* succinctly pictures the fundamental exegetical concept that the Law, when spiritually understood, contains the gospel and is therefore of continuing importance in revealing God's word. The *armarium* in the Codex Amiatinus portrait, also inscribed with the sign of the Cross, offers a variant of this image. The abbreviated titles on the spines of the volumes displayed flat on five shelves are not simply those of the five books of the Law or the four gospels but specify nine groupings of the biblical books which together comprise the Old and New Testaments.

The contents page of the seventh-century Ashburnham Pentateuch uses a thematically related device (Figure 1.3). Its depiction of an arch with shell canopy, flanking birds and four supporting columns is ambiguous in that it recalls Torah niches and abbreviated representations of the Temple or the Ark of the sort seen in the Dura Europa synagogue and Jewish gold glasswork, but also the *tholoi* employed in early gospel book harmony pages.¹⁴ Curtains looped back beneath the arch in the Ashburnham Pentateuch scene reveal a framed list of the latinised Hebrew titles of the five books of Moses contained within this Vulgate manuscript. The recurring sign of the Cross is concealed in the decoration of the arch

12 Origen (trans. R.E. Heine), *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, Washington, 1981, Exodus Homily xiii, at pp. 382–83; Origen (trans. G.W. Barkley), *Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington, 1990, Homily ix, at pp. 196–99. Bede was to continue this tradition in *De tabernaculo*, Book ii, pp. 82–84.

13 R. de Maio, *Das Evangelienbuch auf den Oekumenischen Konzilien*, Vatican, 1963, plate facing p. 10. In the basilica's mosaic programme of Old Covenant prefigurings and New Covenant fulfilment, the scene surmounts the crowning inscription of Sixtus III's chancel arch mosaic: *Xystus episcopus plebs Dei*, strongly emphasising his teaching role.

14 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 76r. E. Revel-Neher, *L'arche d'alliance das l'art juif*, figs. 3, 48, 49, 50, 54, 86; P. Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in manuscripts of the Gospels', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5, 1950, pp. 41–138, figs. 35–38, 53–55.

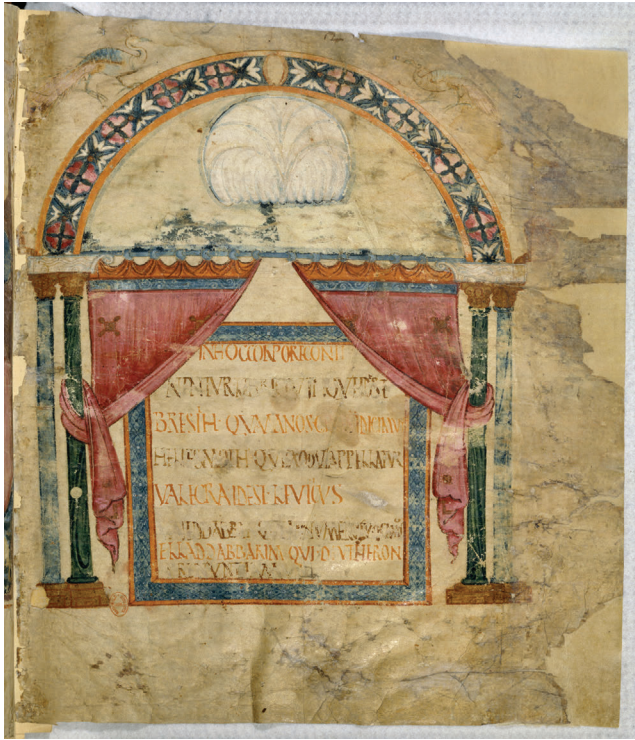


Figure 1.3 The Ashburnham Pentateuch, contents page. MS nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 76r. Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

over the books of the Law, however, and the spiritual meaning concealed within the letter of the Pentateuch is revealed in the manuscript's illustrations. In the composite scene on fol. 76r depicting the Exodus accounts of Moses and the Law, the Aaronite priesthood and the Tabernacle, a eucharistic altar takes the place of the altar of holocausts (Exodus 24:8; cf. Hebrews 9:19–23).¹⁵ The earthly Tabernacle stands as an image of the heavenly Tabernacle 'not made with hands' (cf. Hebrews 9:7–12, 24–25).

Originally conjoint with the contents page listing the seventy-one books of the complete Bible contained in the Amiatinus, fol. VIIv displays the names of the books of the Pentateuch alone (Plate 1.2). The five titles are inscribed in five linked [8] golden circles arranged in the shape of the Cross. In *De tabernaculo* Bede comments that each board of the Tabernacle's walls was fitted with

15 K. Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, New York, 1977, pl. 47; D.H. Verkerk, 'Exodus and Easter Vigil in the Ashburnham Pentateuch', *Art Bulletin* 77, 1995, pp. 92–105, fig. 3.



Plate 1.2 The Codex Amiatinus. Pentateuch circles page. MS Amiatino 1, fol. VIIv. Reproduced with permission from the Laurentian Library, Florence, with the concession of the MiBAC.

five rings of gold signifying the perpetual brightness of the heavenly homeland already contained in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The five golden rings are threaded by bars covered by five golden plates showing that the words of the divine Law which, even according to their literal sense, are powerful in strengthening the life of the faithful, also contain 'a higher meaning which is [9] very bright with evangelical brilliance'.¹⁶ Jerome's Epistle 53, known to Cassiodorus and to Bede, surveys all the books of the Bible not as an exercise in scholarly classification but in order to provide his learned correspondent with a guide to their interpretation. Jerome describes the Scriptures as a sealed book to many who call themselves learned: the divine Wisdom, which is Christ, is a hidden mystery (I Corinthians 2:6, 7; 1:24), concealed beneath the letter of Scripture.¹⁷ The Amiatinus diagram contains Jerome's brief words on each of the five Mosaic books; thus the largest of these circles describes Deuteronomy, its name prefixed by a tiny cross, as 'the second law or the prefiguring of the law of the Gospel', which gives new meaning to old truths.

The harmony of Scripture

The five encircled Pentateuch titles are linked together by a continuous ribbon outline. This device recalls antique *incipits* representing the harmony of the four gospels, as in the sixth-century Rossano Gospels, where portrait medallions of the evangelists at the cardinal points of a circle enclosing the names of the gospels are outlined and linked by a continuous looping ribbon.¹⁸ Knowledge of such devices at Wearmouth-Jarrow is also evident in the circular frontispiece of the uncial gospel fragment (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ms. 32, fol. 101v), which is closely associated with the Amiatinus, and in the central medallion in the Gospel Harmony frontispiece to the New Testament section of the Amiatinus itself, fol. 796v.¹⁹ One of the concentric circles framing the frontispiece medallion is composed of a continuous multi-coloured pleated ribbon; the harmonious yet fourfold nature of the gospel is suggested by the illusionist technique of indicating the distinctive direction of the pleating in each arc of ribbon between the four cardinal points of the circle (Plate 1.3). The frontispiece and its accompanying texts before the opening of the New Testament form a weighty but often neglected comple-

16 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, ii, pp. 68–69. Many other occurrences of the number five and its multiples in the Exodus description of the tabernacle's dimensions and vessels are interpreted as a symbol of the four Gospels and the spiritual meaning concealed within the Pentateuch and the Decalogue.

17 J. Labourt (ed. and trans.), *Saint-Jérôme, Lettres*, 8 vols, Paris, 1949–63, Ep. 53. 9–25, vol. 3, pp. 8–25. *Ad Paulinum presbyterum* (English translation: P. Schaff and H. Wace (eds.), *Nicene and PostNicene Fathers*, series 2, 6, 1892, reprint Grand Rapids, 1996, pp. 96–102).

18 C. Nordenfalk, *Die Spätantiken Kanontafeln*, Göteborg, 1938, 1, figs. 18–23; Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life', p. 109, figs. 57–60.

19 C.A. Farr, 'The shape of learning at Wearmouth-Jarrow: the diagram pages in the Codex Amiatinus', in J. Hawkes and S. Mills (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age*, Stroud, 1999, pp. 336–44 at pp. 338–40, fig. 27.5.



Plate 1.3 The Codex Amiatinus. Maiestas Domini. MS Amiatino 1, fol. 796v. Reproduced with permission from the Laurentian Library, Florence, with the concession of the MiBAC.

ment to the Pentateuch diagram and other texts and diagrams placed before the Old Testament.

The four evangelists are shown as terrestrial figures standing at the four corners of the earth in the rectangular composition of the frontispiece. They are aligned with the four winged creatures shown on the circumference of the central medallion, which depicts Christ's cosmic majesty. These creatures, who surround the divine throne in the apocalyptic vision (Revelation 4:6–9), were densely expounded by patristic and Insular commentators as symbols of the four evangelists and of their distinctive but harmonious revelations of Christ.²⁰ In the Frankish Gundohinus Gospels, c. 751–54, whose quincunx *Maestas Domini* also shows the influence of Late Antique Harmony *incipits*, the standing evangelists are shown in separate portraits.²¹ The Amiatinus's single unified design makes an important theological statement. The earthly evangelists and the heavenly creatures all turn to the central image of Christ, who holds a book, identifying the incarnate Christ, revealed in the gospels, with the glorified Christ adored by the heavenly host.

The design also suggests the harmony of the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament vision of the four winged creatures draws on Ezekiel's vision of [11] the cherubim, and on Isaiah's of the seraphim; the seraphim are further associated in exegesis with the Old Testament accounts of the two cherubim which were placed over the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple.²² Patristic writers, followed by Bede, make free use of this chain of texts; and the depiction of the two angelic beings who flank Christ in the Amiatinus *Maestas* scene may similarly suggest various aspects of these theophanies.

Bede, for example, connects Ezekiel's cherubim with the cherubim that God ordered Moses to place over the Ark (Exodus 25:17). God's promise to speak to his people from between the two cherubim flanking the Ark and looking towards one another (Exodus 25:18–25) signifies that through the words of the two Testaments, and through the Incarnation which they foretell and describe, the Lord 'instructs us in the true faith with one harmonious voice'.²³ The Ark 'designates the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (I Corinthians 3:2)'. The Law enshrined in the Ark contains the whole nature of belief and life in Christ, if spiritually interpreted. The four carrying rings at the corners of the Ark prefigure the four gospels, carrying belief in Christ to the four corners of the world.'²⁴

20 J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the Evangelists: exegesis and iconography', in A.M. Luiselli and É. Ó Carragáin (eds.), *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in Età Romanobarbarica*, Rome, 1998, pp. 49–94.

21 Autun, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. lat. 3, fol. 12v. L. Nees, *The Gundohinus Gospels*, Cambridge, Mass., 1987, pp. 167–71, 185–88, pl. 18, figs. 50–51.

22 Ezekiel 10:3–22; Isaiah 6:1–4; Exodus 25:16–22; 3 Kings 6:19–28.

23 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, i., pp. 14–17, for exegesis on the Ark (Exodus 25:10–16).

24 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, i, pp. 17–21. Gregory the Great (trans. H. Davis), *Pastoral Care*, Westminster Md., 1950, part 2, chapter 11, pp. 86–88.

The keeping of the Law and its gospel fulfilment are also shown by Bede to be figured in the account of the two larger cherubim set over the Ark in the Temple. Each has two wings, each wing of five cubits; with their inner wings they touch each other and with their outer wings they touch the walls of the sanctuary.²⁵ In the Amiatinus roundel these features are applied not to the Ark but directly to Christ. The two attendant angelic beings incline towards each other; their inner wings touch the circle immediately surrounding Christ, their outer wings touch the framing medallion. There is a broadly comparable arrangement in the Gundohinus Gospels' *Maiestas* scene where the two angelic beings flanking Christ are actually identified by inscription as cherubim.²⁶ The same Christ, figured in the Old Testament Ark of the Law and revealed in his incarnation in the fourfold gospel, is here revealed in heavenly glory.

Jerome's gospel preface *Plures fuisse* expounds the harmony of the gospels, prefigured in the four ring of the Ark, and the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, which he demonstrates by harmonising their two accounts of the four winged creatures.²⁷ In the Codex Amiatinus the harmony frontispiece to the New Testament is faced by Jerome's letter to Pope Damasus, *Novum Opus*, fols. 797–797v, asserting the orthodoxy of his revision of the Latin gospel text at the Pope's behest and explaining the ten Eusebian canon tables, an exegetical text which lists the concordances and the diversity of the four gospels in ten tables, probably suggesting not only the harmony of the gospels but also that the gospel is contained within the Decalogue.²⁸ The canon tables immediately follow, set out under stately arcades. Tall arcades are also used in the opening quire of the Codex Amiatinus to frame the dedication, the Prologue and the contents list of all the books of the Old and the New Testaments contained in the pandect, fols. Iv, IVr–IVv.

In the *Institutiones* Cassiodorus showed that the harmony of the various books of the Bible is reflected in the harmony of the diverse Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts of Scripture and related works of Christian scholarship. He likened the [13] different classifications of the books of the Bible found in Jerome, Augustine and the Septuagint to the evangelists, in whom faith is uniform though 'the manner of speaking divergent'.²⁹ In the Amiatinus all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament, arranged according to the three different classifications, are listed in three further diagrams in the opening quire (fols. VIr, 8r, VIIr); their titles

25 Bede, *De templo*, i, pp. 178–83.

26 Nees, *The Gundohinus Gospels*, pp. 185–88. For *Maiestas Domini* image see H.L. Kessler, *The Illuminated Bibles from Tours*, Princeton, 1977, pp. 36–58, pls. 49–64.

27 Jerome, *Plures fuisse*, from *Prefatio to Commentariorum in Matheum*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 77, 1–4; Ep. 18A for exegesis on seraphim.

28 C. Nordenfalk, 'Canon Tables on papyrus', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 36, 1982, pp. 29–39 at pp. 29–30, cites Eusebius's *Oration in Praise of Constantine* and suggests that arcaded canon tables function as 'a propylaeum through which we approach the *sanctum sanctorum* of Holy Writ'.

29 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, i.12–14, pp. 36–41 (trans. L. Webber Jones), *Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, New York, 1946, p. 102. All quotations in English are from this translation.

are inscribed within cross- or lozenge-shaped frames suspended from medallion depictions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Referring to both Testaments, the *ansata* caption of the classification according to Jerome speaks of ‘the Lord Christ, concerning whom and through whom these things were written’; the epigraph over Augustine’s classification announces ‘Whatever volumes display the Lord’s eloquence, God the Spirit has poured this forth from his holy mouth’.³⁰ Such sustained and varied expression of the theme of the unity of divinely inspired Scripture provides the immediate context for the interpretation of the scribal portrait in the Amiatinus.

The living library

In Jerome’s Epistle 53 the sentence following the section of text which is inscribed in the five circles of the Amiatinus Pentateuch diagram identifies the five books of Moses with the ‘five words’ which St Paul wished to speak ‘with understanding’ in the Church (I Corinthians 14:19). Thus the Pentateuch stands for the whole of Hebrew Scripture in which the New Testament is figured. Jerome stresses that Paul, a Jew trained in expounding the Law of Moses (Acts 22:3) carried the texts of the Law in his head and was able to deploy them appropriately when preaching that their prophetic witness was fulfilled in the coming of Christ.³¹ Jerome describes Paul as a vessel of the Law (cf. Acts 9:15), and as an *armarium* of the holy Scriptures (*vas legis et sanctarum scripturarum armarium*) adapting a *topos* of the trained memory containing texts classified and arranged in orderly fashion, as on the shelves or a bookcase or in a library, so that they operated as a concordance.

In the *Institutiones* Cassiodorus cites Jerome’s Epistle 53 and its reference to Paul, noting that although his own modest work was addressed to unpolished monks it had a common purpose with Jerome’s Epistle in providing a guide to the reading of Scripture. In describing how he came to have pictures of the Tabernacle and Temple inserted in his larger pandect, Cassiodorus recalls that a scholar who had discussed with him the heavenly meanings figured in the Tabernacle, Temple and priestly vestments was blind but was able to act as a bibliographical guide for the sighted, even as to the physical layout of particular books, because he ‘had stored away so many books in the library of his memory’.³² So too Jerome had eulogised Nepotian as a model of priesthood who, by constant reading and meditation on the Christian Fathers, ‘had made his breast a library of Christ’ (*pectus suum bibliothecam fecerat Christi*).³³

Occasionally a book chest (*arca*), rather than the cupboard or *armarium*, was used in depictions of the Ark of the Covenant, as in the Amiatinus diagram of the

30 G. Henderson, ‘Cassiodorus and Eadfrith’, p. 84; Meyvaert, ‘Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus’, pp. 839–44.

31 Jerome, Ep. 53.3.

32 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, i.5:2, pp. 22–23, trans. pp. 84–85.

33 Jerome, Ep. 60.10.

Tabernacle. Among medieval adaptations of the classical metaphor of the ordered and well-stocked memory as a bookcase or treasure chest, Mary Carruthers has [14] noted that the Ashburnham Pentateuch's representation of Noah's Ark as a chest on four legs illustrates the well-known 'double understanding of *arca* as both the Ark of Noah and the Ark of the Covenant'.³⁴ Early manuscripts of the Beatus Apocalypse, which include Gregory of Elvira's exegesis on Noah's Ark as a figure of the Church, depict Noah's Ark like an open upright *armarium* with five 'shelves' or decks and with a pair of birds in the pediment as in the *armarium* in the Amiatinus portrait.³⁵ The concept underlying this visualisation is already well-developed in Origen's Pentateuch homilies: Noah's Ark, which God commanded to be built 'with two decks' and 'with three decks', is described as the ark of salvation which every believer must build within his heart, 'dedicating a library, so to speak, of the divine work within himself'.³⁶

The image of the sacred library, interpreted in the living tradition of the faithful, was familiar to Insular writers. In *De controuersia paschali*, c. 633, Cummian describes how he deferred to the superior knowledge of others in the universal Church – Hebrews, Greeks and Latins – and sought guidance by consulting Scripture before turning to the writings of the Fathers and conciliar decrees. Cummian's letter presents his scholarly research as the spiritual task of discerning God's word, and the act of interpreting Scripture as entering into the divine presence: 'Having cloistered myself for a year and having entered the sanctuary of God (that is sacred Scripture) I studied as much as I was able, then I examined the histories and finally the [paschal] cycles' (*secretus sanctuarium Dei [. . .] hoc est scripturam sanctam*).³⁷ The views quoted from the Fathers are given as though they were speaking directly with him, like the living elders of his own community. The letter gives a vivid picture of the scholar in his library and of the sacred responsibility of his task.

In Italy, there is some evidence of Church libraries and of the 'Christian appropriation of the classical practice of decorating library rooms with busts, paintings, or mosaics of revered authors'.³⁸ Looking for possible exemplars for the Vivarium image underlying the Amiatinus portrait, George Henderson speculated on the

34 M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 43.

35 Tenth-century Gerona *Beatus*, Gerona Cathedral, Ms. 7, fols. 102v–103; Morgan *Beatus*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Lib. M.644, fol. 79r; J. Williams, *Early Spanish Manuscript Illumination*, London, 1977, pl. 14 (and pl. 10 for *armarium*-type of Ark of the Covenant with Aaron in Leviticus frontispiece of Leon Bible, fol. 50).

36 Origen, Genesis Homily, ii.6, pp. 86–87.

37 M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (ed. and trans.), *Cummian's Letter De Controversia Paschale*, Toronto, 1988, pp. 15–18, 57–59.

38 H.Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, New Haven and London, 1995, pp. 161–70 at p. 165. He cites a wall inscription from probably the earliest Lateran library which refers to the writings of the fathers and is placed beneath a fifth- or early sixth-century fresco of a seated reading figure, possibly Augustine: *Diversi diversa patres s[ed hic] omnia dixit / Romano eloquio mysticas sensa tonans*, p. 303, n. 58, fig. 6.

kind of picture that may once have accompanied a surviving inscription from the library founded in Rome by Cassiodorus's friend, Pope Agapetus: 'The venerable band of holy men sits in a row. Sitting among them, Agapetus, by right a priest, has established by art a beautiful place for his books [. . .]'. He suggested that the picture of Agapetus may have represented the other scholars not by portraits but by 'fictive books stacked in a fictive bookcase'.³⁹ Such a picture celebrating a particular library and its revered founder might also have suggested the metaphor of Christian learning discussed here, for the inscription describes the venerable band as 'teaching the mystical precepts of the divine law'; through grace Agapetus 'is one with them in his holy labour. All their words, although divergent, express a single faith'.

Novem codices

The lost Vivarium image may have had such a symbolic function in keeping with Cassiodorus's ambiguous description of the *novem codices* in the library at Vivarium which have, inevitably, been identified with the nine labelled codices [15] displayed in the *armarium* in the Amiatinus portrait. Sometimes Cassiodorus seems to be referring to the scholarly and scribal creation of nine actual volumes which together contain all the books of Scripture in the best possible texts, but at other times he describes the work of his library in acquiring works of the Fathers which expound the meaning of all the biblical books in each of nine groupings and the skills and knowledge necessary for interpretation. Cassiodorus offers this account of the library to his monks as a guide, 'in place of a teacher', after the collapse of his plan to set up Christian schools in Rome with Agapetus. The description of the library includes pen-portraits of great Christian scholars who have typified the combination of zeal and knowledge – Hilary, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine – but culminates in a model from his own time, Abbot Dionysius, a Scythian monk 'exceedingly learned in both tongues', of whom Cassiodorus humbly testifies, 'I am ashamed to state the presence of qualities in my colleague which I cannot discover in myself [. . .] May he who used to pray with us pray for us [. . .] whose prayer is our support on this earth'.⁴⁰ One can only speculate whether any particular exemplar survives in the haloed elderly figure of the Amiatinus portrait. The scribe's depiction in the pose of an evangelist portrait, however, suggests this is not purely a commemorative portrait of an individual but exemplifies the patristic idea, elaborated in the *Institutiones*, that in all those who zealously translate, expound or even humbly copy the divine precepts, the Holy Spirit continues to work, as in the biblical authors by whom those inspired precepts were first written.

39 Henderson, 'Cassiodorus and Eadfrith', p. 85; J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979, p. 183.

40 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, i, Preface and pp. 18–23.

Cassiodorus shows that the establishment of God's word is itself an act of interpretation requiring more than scholarly gifts. He told his monks that in order for the Holy Spirit to 'hear unblemished what it had bestowed', they should correct copies of the divinely inspired Scriptures 'from the codices which the blessed Jerome emended in his edition of the Septuagint and translated from the Hebrew or, as blessed Augustine says, have recourse to the Greek pandect, which is known to have collected all divine law; and let not those to whom it is possible refuse to consult the Hebrew Scripture [. . .] from which an authoritative translation came to us'.⁴¹ For this task Vivarium possessed a Greek pandect and two Latin pandects, namely Jerome's translation of the Old Testament 'altered by the translations of many scholars' and 'emended and perfected' by Jerome (his incomplete hexaplaric revision of the Latin translation of the Septuagint, probably contained in the *codex grandior*) and his own translation directly from Hebrew. The translations of Jerome offered Latin scholars access to the Greek and Hebrew texts but did not provide official editions. Richard Marsden has noted the likelihood that the *novem codices* constituted Cassiodorus's revised working copy of Scripture and that its general arrangement of the biblical books was probably that outlined in the Augustinian order displayed by the nine books in the Amiatinus *armarium*.⁴² 'Its dominant position in the [Amiatinus] miniature would [. . .] be an indication of the importance of this Bible in the textual activities of the [Vivarium] house'. He concluded that such a picture 'would be appropriate as a frontispiece for any Bible copied or emended with reference to it, and an obvious candidate is the *codex grandior*'. Others have proposed that the *novem codices* also reached Northumbria with the [16] exemplar of this picture as a frontispiece. Either way, it need not follow that the picture was a purely commemorative picture of the library's physical production of the books.

Cassiodorus's influential exposition on the Psalms, a work known in Wearmouth-Jarrow, uses the familiar patristic concept that the Psalter may be seen to contain within its scope 'all of Genesis, the Prophets, the Gospels and the message of the Apostles'. The Psalter is, therefore, a *caeleste armarium scripturarum divinarum*; it 'embraces both the New and Old Testaments in such a way that [. . .] a spiritual library is built up in this book'.⁴³ The interpretation of the Old and New Testaments as a unity could also be powerfully represented by literally putting all the biblical books in one volume (*in pandecte*). To Wearmouth-Jarrow's pandect of the *vetusta translatio*, Ceolfrith added *tres pandectes novae translationis*,

41 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, i.15:11, trans. p. 109.

42 Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 133–39 at p. 138; P. Michelli, 'What's in the cupboard? Ezra and Matthew reconsidered', in Hawkes and Mills (eds.), *Northumbria's Golden Age*, pp. 345–57, argues that all the *novem codices* reached Northumbria and provided the text for the Amiatinus.

43 Cassiodorus (ed. M. Adriaen), *Expositio in Psalmorum*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vols. 97–98, Turnhout, 1958, at 97, p. 639, and 98, pp. 647, 1330. Cassiodorus (trans. P.G. Walsh), *Explanation of the Psalms*, 3 vols., New York, 1990–1, 2, pp. 179, 181, and 3, p. 467.

placing two of them ‘in the churches of his monastery, so that it would be possible for all who wanted to read some chapter of either Testament to find without difficulty what they desired’.⁴⁴ Whether or not the Wearmouth-Jarrow community was familiar with the *Institutiones*, or possessed the entire set of *novem codices*, the Amiatinus’s picture of an *armarium* filled with volumes of diverse bindings, whose titles spell out the constituent groupings of all the biblical books, forms a fitting frontispiece to a pandect which is itself an *armarium scripturarum* or *divina bibliotheca*. The opening quire contains four more pages of framed ‘catalogues’ to this library: the contents page and the three classifications of Scripture, using different biblical texts, depict the unity and divine inspiration of Scripture and of its orthodox translators and interpreters. The quire proclaims the faith of those who were continuing in the same tradition at the ends of the earth.

The High Priest

The present discussion has proceeded from George Henderson’s view that the Amiatinus scribal portrait is a record of a sixth-century exemplar, not an Insular pastiche. However, the concept of Christian learning conveyed by the image of the *armarium* does not explain why the scribe is wearing Jewish high-priestly insignia on his head and breast and possibly phylacteries on his wrist. This has usually been explained as a means of representing Ezra, or Cassiodorus in the guise of Ezra. If we continue, for a moment, to consider the picture without the inscription which alone has given rise to this interpretation, then scriptural exegesis on biblical images of the scribe can offer a possible insight into the scribal portrait, which is consonant with the image of the Ark-like *armarium scripturarum*.

Jerome castigated those Christians who, like the scribes and pharisees condemned by Christ, ‘sit on the chair of Moses’ (Matthew 23:1), concerned with observing the letter of the law in their outward customs and distinctions of religious dress, yet failing to practise the divine word in their lives. Jerome directly likened such scribes and pharisees and their Christian counterparts to *armaria* and *arcae*: although they contain books, they do not have knowledge of God. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (*quae habent zelum Dei sed non iuxta scientiam*, Romans 10:2). Clearly this kind of knowledge means more than just knowing the sacred books in the *armarium*.⁴⁵ [18]

The haloed scribe in the Amiatinus portrait more readily evokes the image of the scribe in Matthew 13:52: ‘Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a man that is a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure new things and old’ (*qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera*). Exegetes from Irenaeus and Origen onwards interpreted this text as referring to the need to imitate Christ, who

44 *Vita Ceolfridi*, xx, p. 395; (trans. D.S. Boutflower), *The Life of Ceolfrid*, London, 1912, p. 69.

45 Jerome (eds. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen), *Commentariorum in Matheum*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 77, Turnhout, 1969, pp. 210–12.

draws out of his treasure the two Testaments showing the evangelical fulfilment of the Law and prophets, and the spiritual meaning underlying the old Law. Bede frequently used this image in his exegesis, warning against trying to bring forth from the treasure of Scriptures only the old, 'that is, in Judaic fashion to follow only the literal meaning of the figures'. In his commentary on the Tabernacle he explains that 'every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven' is required, like Moses, to look diligently at the pattern of the Tabernacle and its vessels which was divinely shown to him on the mountain and to make the Tabernacle according to the heavenly pattern when he returns to the regions below (Exodus 25:8–9, 40): that is, the scribe must seek to understand the spiritual meaning of the divine word of Scripture in his heart and to practise it in his life and teaching.⁴⁶

Bede is here drawing on a tradition of scriptural exegesis going back to Origen. In his Pentateuch homilies, which were among the extraordinary number of his exegetical works available in the Vivarium library, Origen expounds the Mosaic Tabernacle, its furnishings and priesthood in the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In order to see God in Scripture it is necessary for the faithful reader to set up an inner Tabernacle or Ark of the Covenant 'in which are the tablets of the Law, that "he may meditate on the Law of God day and night (cf. Psalm 1:2)". And let his memory become an ark and library of the books of God because blessed are they who hold God's commands in memory that they may do them'.⁴⁷ The reference to carrying out God's word is a crucial recurring feature of such exegesis but poses the question of how the Amiatinus portrait could possibly suggest this dimension of the image of the inner library or Ark.

The Epistle to the Hebrews recalls that under the Old Covenant only the anointed priests of Aaron's line, ritually cleansed and vested, could enter into the presence of the Ark in the veiled Holy of Holies: under the New Covenant, however, Christ the great High Priest passed through the veil and entered into the heavenly sanctuary 'not made with hands' (Hebrews 9:6–11). Since all his followers are anointed into his priesthood at their baptism, they too can hope eventually to enter the eternal Holy of Holies. In order to have a foretaste of the heavenly sanctuary, exegetes urged the faithful to enter the spiritual *inner* sanctuary, cleansed and wearing the vestments of the high priest. By this they meant that the faithful must seek and practise the spiritual interpretation of each item of the vestments of the Aaronite priesthood, whose ordination is described in the Pentateuch as the essential accompaniment to the enshrining of the Law in the Tabernacle.

46 Bede (ed. D. Hurst), *In primam partem Samuhelis*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 119, Turnhout, 1962, p. 9. Bede, *De tabernaculo*, i, pp. 40–41 on Exodus 25:40, elaborated in ii.7, p. 70: 'In the figure of the tabernacle and the priestly and Levitical ministry which he describes, [Moses] exhibits for us this same pattern of a more perfect life and a more blessed reward. And the tabernacle is erected according to the pattern that was shown to him on the mountain when all the elect bring intention and deed together'. Matthew 13:52 is cited again, *De tabernaculo* ii, p. 65; Bede, *De templo*, ii, p. 201.

47 Origen, Exodus Homily ix.4, p. 343.

The Exodus account itself, elaborated in Leviticus, prompted the idea of the spiritual significance of the priestly vestments: the oracular breastplate or 'logion' for example, is there described as 'the rationale of judgement, doctrine and truth'; the golden plate to be hung over the priest's brow was inscribed 'holy to the Lord' [19] (Exodus 28:29, 36). For Origen, the Christian faithful were exhorted to put on spiritually the high-priestly head-dress which symbolised Truth or Holiness and the breastplate with the twelve stones arranged in four rows of three, in which he saw a figure of the Trinity manifested in the fourfold gospel: 'You too can function as a high priest before God within the temple of your spirit if you would prepare your garments with zeal and vigilance'. Those who would enter the heavenly tabernacle (Psalm 14:1) must first be clothed in high-priestly garments, signifying purity of heart, and enter the inner sanctuary so that they may learn the meaning of the divine commandments contained in 'the ark and library of the books of God'.⁴⁸ The scribe who thus 'meditates on the law of the Lord day and night' (Psalm 1:2), that is, who interiorises the law and lives and teaches the gospel, both becomes a Tabernacle or dwelling-place of God and contributes to the building up and adornment of the Tabernacle which is the Church of all the faithful on earth.

The spiritual significance of the priestly garments and insignia was expounded by Jerome in his Epistle 64 *Ad Fabiolam*, and its particular relevance for those with pastoral care was detailed by Gregory the Great in his *Regulae pastoralis*.⁴⁹ These works were used by Bede in his own interpretation of the vestments of the Aaronite priesthood. In *De tabernaculo*, for example, Bede shows how the twelve stones of Aaron's breastplate signify faith in the Trinity and the practice of the four cardinal virtues which the pastor should always exhibit 'so that by imitating his right faith and action [the faithful] may themselves also merit to be made members of the High Priest'.⁵⁰ In the tradition of monastic *lectio divina*, Cassian had urged his monks, 'Apply yourselves constantly to holy reading so that this continual meditation may finally impregnate your soul and form, so to say, its own image. It makes the soul in some ways the Ark of the Covenant, enclosing within it the two tablets of the two Testaments'.⁵¹ By living out the scriptural precepts, the monk will become the sanctuary where the Lord promises to make his dwelling-place. The image was taken up by Bede's great mentor Gregory and applied especially to all who are called to teach and who, by meditating in their hearts on the sacred word and living it in their lives, raise the Ark of the Scriptures 'to bring Holy Church through preaching to untutored minds'. Such teachers

48 Origen, Exodus Homily ix.4, pp. 343–44; Marcel Borrez (ed. and trans.), *Origène. Homélie sur le Lévitique*, Sources chrétiennes, 286 and 287, Paris, 1981, Homilies vi and ix in vol. 286, Homily xii in 287; Origen (trans. G.W. Barkley), *Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington, 1990, vi.5, p. 125, ix.1, p. 177, xii.4, p. 225.

49 Jerome, Ep. 64. Gregory, *Pastoral Care*, part 2, chapters 2–3, pp. 46–51.

50 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, ii, p. 104.

51 Jean Cassien (ed. and trans. E. Pichery), *Conférences*, Sources chrétiennes 42, 54 and 64, Paris, 1955, 1958 and 1959, vol. 54, Conference xiv, p. 10.

must sometimes retire to the Tabernacle, 'into the secret recesses of the mind'; by 'looking into the divine law (that is by meditating on Scripture) they consult the Lord, as it were, before the Ark [. . .] they are to appear in the vesture of the High Priest within the Holy of Holies'.⁵²

The scribal figure in the Amiatinus picture is not literally a Jewish high priest, arrayed in all eight vestments, but is depicted with a sash and two of the high-priestly insignia: the breastplate or rational and the head-dress (from which there sprouted 'something like a golden calyx', noted Bede, using Josephus to illuminate the description in Exodus 28:39).⁵³ In his commentaries Bede also clarifies the literal sense of the biblical descriptions of the Tabernacle and Temple by reference to details he had seen in Cassiodorus's pictures of the Tabernacle and the Temple, which he believed Cassiodorus based on information 'from teachers among the Jews'. He twice says that Cassiodorus had referred to these pictures in his exposition on the Psalms, an influential commentary Bede knew in its full [20] version.⁵⁴ Cassiodorus sees the universal Church *and* the heavenly sanctuary to come prefigured in Psalm 14's reference to the Tabernacle which, he adds, 'Josephus in the seventh chapter of the third book of his *Antiquities* has described in careful narrative and we have had it painted and placed at the beginning of our larger pandect'.⁵⁵ This is the picture in the *codex grandior* that most scholars assume underlies the Amiatinus diagram of the Tabernacle.

Psalm 14 opens with the Psalmist asking, 'Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?' and supplies God's answer to the question with a description of the righteous man who keeps God's Law. To answer the question of what this means for the Christian reader, Cassiodorus transforms the Old Testament image of the ritually cleansed and vested Aaronite high priest who alone was entitled to stand before the Ark of the Covenant to hear God speak. Cassiodorus likens the interpretation of the Psalm's inner meaning to the act of a priest entering the sanctuary to stand before the Lord to receive an oracle from Christ, who had himself fulfilled the Law when he entered the tabernacle of human flesh at his Incarnation and so entered into the heavenly sanctuary. The literal text of Scripture, and here specifically of Psalm 14:2, is spiritually expounded by Cassiodorus as though by Christ. He reveals that the ten virtues contained in the Psalm's description of the righteous man, which he describes as 'the divine Decalogue', are to be found exemplified in the gospel accounts of Christ. They are virtues which must be practised by all

52 Gregory, *Pastoral Care*, 2.5, pp. 57–58.

53 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, iii, pp. 117–18.

54 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, ii, p. 82; Bede, *De templo*, ii, pp. 192–93.

55 Cassiodorus, *Expositio in psalmorum*, 97, p. 133; J. Halporn, 'Pandectes, pandecta, and the Cassiodorian Commentary on the Psalms', *Revue Bénédictine*, 90, 1980, pp. 290–300, argues that this and the parallel comment in Psalm 86 'were Cassiodorus's marginal notes, interpolated into the psalm texts'. Cassiodorus: *Explanation of the Psalms*, 1, Psalm 14, p. 157; 2, Psalm 86, pp. 337–38.

who wish to dwell in the Lord's tabernacle, meaning here not simply the Church on earth but the heavenly sanctuary.⁵⁶

Jerome repeatedly described his translation from the Hebrew as an offering to the Tabernacle which was not intended to disparage the gifts offered by the old translators: 'For the service of the tabernacle of God each one offers what he can: some gold and silver [. . .] (Exodus 25:1–9, 35:4–29) We shall do well if we offer skins and goats' hair'. He likened his work to the coverings which, though made of such humble materials, had protected the Tabernacle and its precious ornaments from harmful sun and rain. Wearmouth-Jarrow's appreciation of the true value of Jerome's offering to the Church (and indirectly of its own gift), is inscribed on the contents page of the Codex Amiatinus. It borrows a *titulus* from Isidore, hailing Jerome as the learned interpreter of languages, proclaimed throughout the world, and then adds

Our library will reveal you through your writings
Where you set new offerings alongside ancient treasures [*Qua noua cum
priscis condis donaria gazis*].⁵⁷

The Amiatinus scribe before his *armarium* suggests something of the Christian scholar who has spiritually prepared himself to enter the sanctuary of sacred Scripture to discern and interiorise the meaning of God's word revealed in the Old Testament and the New; such a scholar himself becomes God's dwelling-place or Tabernacle. In his works and teaching – both in providing texts of the Scriptures and in their interpretation – he makes an offering to the Tabernacle which is the Church [21].

Ezra and providential history

In a recent major review of problems related to the opening quire, Paul Meyvaert argues that the portrait is of Ezra and that his depiction before a cupboard containing both Testaments is 'clearly an anomaly'. The picture derives from a portrait of Cassiodorus in the *codex grandior* which the Wearmouth-Jarrow community, not knowing the *Institutiones*, failed to recognise as Cassiodorus. Dr Meyvaert further suggests that the writing on the scribe's open book, resembling Tyronian notation, also existed in the exemplar and prompted Bede's community to conclude that the scribal figure 'must be Ezra', because he is described as a swift scribe in 1 Ezra 7:6; Bede explained this as a reference to Ezra's invention of a shorthand script 'which enabled him to restore more rapidly all the Hebrew books that had been destroyed' after the Babylonian Captivity. Because Ezra is also described as *pontifex* in 3 Ezra 9:39–40, 50 (a book, Meyvaert argues, that Bede was slow to realise had been criticised by Jerome), the Wearmouth-Jarrow artists themselves

56 Cassiodorus, *Expositio in psalmorum*, 97, pp. 132–36.

57 Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 103–06.

added the high-priestly headgear and breastplate to the portrait and Bede composed the couplet in order to complete their identification of the scribe with Ezra. The halo was also added to 'the refurbished image' of *beatus Ezra*, whom Bede described as *typus Christi*.⁵⁸

In the present paper the Amiatinus portrait has so far been discussed as an entity but without reference to the inscription above its frame: *Codicibus sacris hostili clade perustis / Esdra Deo feruens hoc reparavit opus* [The sacred books having been burned by enemy destruction, Ezra, zealous for God, restored this work]. Is the inscription compatible with the interpretation of the Amiatinus's image of the scribe and *armarium* suggested here; what was its significance for Bede's community; and was the couplet part of the exemplar, or was it added to the portrait in Wearmouth-Jarrow?

Cassiodorus records 'On each of the two books of Esdras [i.e. Ezra and Nehemiah] I have found written in Greek a single sermon of Origen', which Cassiodorus had translated by Bellator.⁵⁹ These lost homilies may well have been an important witness to traditions about Ezra referred to in the Amiatinus *titulus*, but Cassiodorus makes no further comment. The *topos* of the library had been used by a British writer, specifically with reference to Ezra, during the sixth century. In the *De excidio Britanniae*, which was to be an important influence on Bede's historiography, Gildas shows that priestly failure to know, to practise and to teach the divine law has disastrous consequences for the whole people of God, in post-Roman Britain, beleaguered by the barbarian Saxons, just as it did for the ancient Israelites, overcome by the Babylonians. Gildas shows that, spiritually interpreted, the Scriptures offer the reasons for defeat and the means of recovery. Thus Jeremiah's lamentation and the Psalmist's prophecy of the destruction of the Temple (Psalm 73:7) are seen as figures of the Church's parlous spiritual condition; St Paul continues to warn that on the coming day of the Lord each person's work in building the temple of God 'will be revealed in the fire [. . .] if any man's work goes up in flames, he will be the loser. Do you not know that you are the temple of God?' (I Corinthians 3:18–19).⁶⁰

Like Jerome in his Epistle 53, Gildas reveals himself to be a library of the Scriptures by reviewing the entire range of biblical books and showing their [22] continuing significance as the inspired word of God, if properly understood. After long study he humbly offers salutary guidance to Christian rulers and pastors by appropriate exhortations from the New Testament and from all the Old Testament prophets who upheld the Law and who still act 'as the mouth of God and the instrument of the Holy Spirit'. Of all the prophets he commends to the attention of rulers, Gildas reserves the epithet 'the library of the law' to describe Ezra (*beatus*

58 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 70–77.

59 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones*, i.30:1, pp. 75–6, trans. pp. 133–35. H. Crouzel, *Bibliographie critique d'Origène*, Steenbrugis, 1971, pp. 64–65.

60 Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*, ch. 1, pp. 24, 100; M. Winterbottom (ed. and trans.), *Gildas. The Ruin of Britain and other works*, London, 1978, pp. 13, 27, 73.

Esdras propheta ille bibliotheca legis). Gildas quotes Ezra's warning that fire will consume those who do not observe the divine decrees.⁶¹ For Gildas's audience this 'oracle' is a continuing divine injunction to observe the law spiritually.

In the canonical Book of Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra is described as a priest of the line of Aaron and 'a swift scribe in the law of Moses', 'the most learned scribe of the law of God' (1 Ezra 7:1–6, 12), who accompanies returning exiles and Temple vessels from Babylon to Jerusalem. It is only in the quite separate and composite apocryphal work 4 Ezra (used by Gildas) that reference is made to his miraculous restoration of the divine law after it had been destroyed by fire.⁶² Having drunk a divinely administered potion, Ezra dictated not only the Law but the whole of Scripture in twenty-four books (as well as an additional seventy reserved for the wise). God also gave understanding to five named scribes who 'were ready to write swiftly' and took down this inspired dictation in forty days, 'using characters they had not known before' (4 Ezra 14:21–48).

The Amiatinus scribal portrait is clearly not an illustration of this account, and neither the canonical Book of Ezra and Nehemiah, which is contained in the Amiatinus, nor the parallel account in the Septuagint, 3 Ezra, directly describes Ezra's restoration of the Scriptures. In his commentary on the canonical book Bede emphatically does not present 4 Ezra's apocryphal story of the magic potion and dictation to scribes. Instead, he uses an ancient tradition of Ezra's scholarly role in restoring the Scriptures which is of considerable interest in trying to understand the relationship between the inscription and the scribal portrait in the Amiatinus. Knowledge of the tradition is glimpsed in a number of patristic and early medieval writers, notably Hilary of Poitiers,⁶³ and in a Pentateuch commentary ascribed to Archbishop Theodore's school of Canterbury.⁶⁴ This may have been known to Nothelm, with whom Bede discussed the matter in his *Thirty Questions on the Book of Kings*.

Bede describes in Ezra the work of a divinely inspired prophet who was also a learned historian, well aware that parts of the Torah in their post-Exilic form could not literally have been written by Moses. Bede says that Ezra, as most of the greater authorities agree (*ut communis majorum fama est*), restored not only

61 The apocryphal 4 Ezra 15:21–27, quoted in *De excidio*, 60, pp. 48–49.

62 There is a great variety both of modern practice in citing the books of Ezra and of their appearance in medieval Bibles. 1 and 2 Ezra here = Ezra and Nehemiah or I and II Esdras, the two parts of the canonical book in the Vulgate (and constituting Esdras B' in the Septuagint). 3 Ezra here = 1 (III) Esdras, 4 Ezra = 2 (IV) Esdras. 3 and 4 Ezra form Esdras A' in the Septuagint (and appear as 1 and 2 Esdras in modern Apocrypha). The Amiatinus picture's inscription uses *Esdras* but both Ezra and Esdra, the Latin and Greek forms of the name, are used in the Amiatinus's page headings: Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 181–221.

63 J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus . . . Series (Latina) Prima*, 1844–64, Paris, 9, col. 238. Cassiodorus cites Hilary but without reference to Ezra in his *Expositio in psalmorum*, 97, Praefatio xii.15.

64 B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge (trans.), *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, Cambridge, 1994, Pentateuch text, I, pp. 435, 379.

the Law of Moses but the whole run of the sacred Scriptures, which were also destroyed by fire, in a way that seemed to him sufficient for readers. Ezra sifts the surviving evidence and puts in order the scattered and fragmentary texts of Scripture, omitting some scrolls which are now known only by fleeting references to their titles in the Old Testament, and supplying connecting passages where necessary.⁶⁵ This is a description of editorial work. In Bede's *In Genesim*, which shows great interest in textual criticism and the *Hebraica veritas*, and which he interrupted to write his commentary on Ezra, he gives an example of the addition of a name to [23] the Genesis text which it seems reasonable to suppose was made by Ezra the priest when he renewed (*renoverat*) sacred Scripture, after it had been burned by the Babylonians. He adds that experts in sacred Scripture can find many such things added by Ezra.⁶⁶

In the Ezra commentary Bede adds that 'the Hebrews also say, and on this point there is no doubt among them', that Ezra even devised more smoothly flowing letters.⁶⁷ Bede had already used this idea in his *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, recently redated by Meyvaert to c. 715, in explaining to Nothelm why the *Book of the Wars of the Lord* and many other volumes mentioned in Scripture no longer exist:

For when the Chaldeans destroyed Judea, a raging fire consumed its library, which had been assembled long before [. . .] By his diligence, Ezra, High Priest and prophet, later restored from that [library] a few books now contained in Holy Scripture. Consequently, it is written of him, 'Ezra went up from Babylon and he was a swift scribe in the law of Moses' (Ezra 7:6), swift, that is, because he devised shapes of letters that were more easily written than those that the Hebrews had used up until that time.⁶⁸

Ezra was regarded as the last of the inspired prophets. Eusebius quoted Josephus's claim that the ordinances of God were contained in the twenty-two books of Hebrew Scripture which had remained without addition or omission since that

65 Bede (ed. D. Hurst), *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 119A, Turnhout, 1969, p. 307.

66 Bede (ed. C.W. Jones), *In principium Genesim*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 118A, Turnhout, 1967, iii.13, p. 181. J. McClure, 'Bede's Notes on Genesis and the training of the Anglo-Saxon clergy', in K. Walsh and D. Wood (eds.), *The Bible in the Medieval World. Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, Oxford, 1985, pp. 17–30, 24.

67 Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, pp. 307–08. Discussed by J. O'Reilly in an unpublished paper, 'Bede and the Codex Amiatinus', in the Golden Age of Northumbria Conference, University of Newcastle, July 1996.

68 Bede (ed. D. Hurst), *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 119, Turnhout, 1962, pp. 301–02. W. Trent Foley and A.G. Holder (trans.), *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany*, Liverpool, 1999, pp. 101–02; Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 832–34, 874–76, notes Ezra is only described as *pontifex* in 3 Ezra 9:39–40, 50.

time.⁶⁹ Jerome believed himself to be translating that same 'Hebrew truth' into Latin.⁷⁰ In the *Prologus galeatus* (also included in the Amiatinus) which justifies his Latin translation from the Hebrew, Jerome compares the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet with the twenty-two books of Hebrew Scripture. He does not directly attribute the canon to Ezra and simply notes that Ezra, 'the scribe and teacher of the law, after the capture of Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple' certainly devised the Hebrew letters now in use. He refers, 'without objection' but also without elaboration, to the view that Ezra re-edited the Pentateuch.⁷¹ Isidore of Seville describes the scribe Ezra as inspired by the Holy Spirit, restoring the *bibliothecam veteris testamenti*, correcting all the volumes of the Law and the prophets, and establishing the Old Testament in twenty-two books, so that there might be as many books as there are Hebrew letters. He is aware that Ezra collected the Psalms together in one of these books and credits Ezra with the division of Hebrew Scripture into its broad categories: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings or Hagiographia.⁷² The Hiberno-Latin commentary known as the Irish Reference Bible notes that after the Babylonian fire Ezra restored the twenty-two books of the canon, but then recounts the apocryphal legend from 4 Ezra 14.⁷³

In short, the picture of Ezra as scribe, historian and editor is brought to life in Bede's work as in no other surviving testimony of the tradition.⁷⁴ By contrast, the Fathers quite commonly compared the divine inspiration of Ezra with that of the seventy translators who had later made the whole text, not just the Pentateuch, accessible to the new Chosen People through the Greek Septuagint. The Septuagint translation of the Hebrew text of the Jewish Scriptures was regarded by [24] patristic commentators, followed by Bede, as the providential preparation for the conversion of Greek-speaking Gentiles to Christianity and the building up of the Church.⁷⁵ Augustine, the great champion of the Septuagint through its Latin translations and revisions, asserted that whether, as many believed, the Seventy had

69 Eusebius (trans. G.A. Williamson), *The History of the Church*, iii.10, Harmondsworth, 1965, rev. edn, 1989, p. 78.

70 *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, Stuttgart, 1969, 4th edn, 1994, pp. 3–4 (Prologue to Pentateuch) and pp. 638–39 (Prologue to Ezra). Translation of Pentateuch Prologue by E. Richardson, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 3, 1892, reprint Grand Rapids, 1996, pp. 515–16. P. Benoit, 'L'inspiration des Septante d'après les Pères', *Théologie* 56, 1963, pp. 169–87 at pp. 79–84.

71 *Prologus galeatus*, *Biblia Sacra*, p. 364, (trans. W.H. Freemantle), Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, 6, 1892, pp. 489–90; cf. p. 337 for translation of *Contra Helvidius*, ch.7.

72 Isidore (ed. W.M. Lindsay), *Etymologiae*, Oxford, 1911, vi.1:3, 2:16 and 3:2.

73 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. lat. 11561, fols. 76v–77. Probably eighth-century compilation including earlier material.

74 G. Every, 'The Bible in Tradition', *One in Christ* 4, 1996, pp. 323–38 at p. 325 notes that Bede's account of Ezra's editorial activity in particular was to be 'cited intact in the *glossa ordinaria*, the standard commentary on the original, literal sense of the Bible', and in the earliest printed Bibles. I am greatly indebted to George Every for discussion on Ezra and for references to citations of Bede's account in the post-Reformation renewal of biblical studies.

75 Eusebius, *History of the Church*, iii.8, pp. 155–56. Bede, *In Tobiam*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 119B, 4; Bede: *A Biblical Miscellany*, pp. 59, n. 4.

miraculously produced independent but identical translations or whether they had 'joined forces so as to achieve unanimity by open discussion and joint decision', they had been so strongly guided by the Holy Spirit that they 'spoke with but a single voice'. Augustine repeatedly described the seventy (seventy-two) translators as having been inspired by the same Spirit who had inspired the prophets of the Old Testament: they had translated the sense, not the letter, so that variations between the texts could only further illumine the meaning of the divine author.⁷⁶ He hesitated to accord to Jerome's translation the same authority as the Septuagint and its *Itala* Latin version, but Jerome's 'Vulgate' came to be seen as part of the same divinely inspired process, not replacing the Septuagint but offering its own contributions to the growing understanding of Scripture, as Cassiodorus's account of his library shows.⁷⁷ Isidore, having recounted Ezra's work, succinctly summarised the stages of its translation from Hebrew into the Greek Septuagint (and various revisions) and Jerome's translation from Hebrew into Latin.⁷⁸ The universal nature of Christian revelation received by these three distinctive cultures and the proclamation of Christ through their three languages, which had been inscribed on the *titulus* of the Cross, was a patristic *topos* used by Jerome, Isidore, Cumman and other Hiberno-Latin writers, and by Bede in his commentary on Ezra. In Christian panegyric it had been combined with the image of *armaria* filled with new books celebrating the works of Christ in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.⁷⁹

The tradition of Ezra as scribe has not survived in early art, but the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek and Latin was pictured in biblical frontispieces. The earliest complete text of the *Letter of Aristeas*, describing the translation of the Septuagint, is found as an Old Testament prologue in Greek Octateuchs and is accompanied in two Middle Byzantine examples by an illustrated cycle, including a scene of the seated Jewish high priest giving a copy of the Law to the translators.⁸⁰ Similarly, two Carolingian pandect Bibles both have an illustrated frontispiece, based on an Early Christian model, which depicts Jerome learning

76 R.P.H. Green (ed. and trans.), *Augustine: De doctrina christiana*, ii.53, p. 80, ii.34–37, p. 72, iv.48, p. 216; Augustine (ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb), *De civitate Dei*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vols. 47–48, Turnhout, 1955, xv.13, and xviii, chs. 43–4; Augustine (trans. H. Bettenson), *City of God*, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 615, 820–83.

77 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ii.53–55, pp. 80–82, iv.48, p. 216. C. White, *The correspondence (394–419) between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 23, 1990, pp. 35–42.

78 Isidore, *Etymologiae*, vi.3:2 and 4:1–5.

79 Bede, *In Ezzam et Neemiam*, i, p. 249; Prudentius has the allusion to Hebrew, Greek and Latin and the Christian *armarium* in *Apotheosis* – see H.J. Thomson, *Prudentius*, I, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1949, p. 149. I.M. Resnick, 'Lingua Dei, lingua hominis: sacred language and medieval texts', *Viator* 21, 1990, pp. 51–74 at pp. 60–67.

80 Antonio Iacobini, 'La lettera di Aristea: un prologo illustrato al ciclo degli Ottateuchi Medio-bizantini', *Arte Medievale* 7, 1993, pp. 79–95; for the Aristeas letter in earlier Octateuchs see J. Lowden, *The Octateuchs*, pp. 5–6 and Appendix.

Hebrew, translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin and dictating to scribes. The final scene in the Vivian Bible shows copies of Jerome's translation being drawn from *arcae* and placed in churches; in the San Paolo Bible's version, the codices are arranged to form the outer covering of a roofless building, perhaps picturing Jerome's own description of his translation as an offering for the protection of the Tabernacle. In both Bibles the narrative 'portrait' of the translation is followed by Jerome's Epistle 53 on the spiritual interpretation of Scripture and by his Preface to the Pentateuch on the scholarly establishment of its text.⁸¹ This Preface, also included in the Codex Amiatinus, sharply separates the miraculous versions of the Septuagint's creation from the more sober accounts of Aristee and Josephus who describe the seventy (seventy-two), as prophesying alike not in separate cells but consulting together on the translation in one basilica. Jerome implies that the Seventy's translation and his own are both the work of interpreters, theirs before and his after the Incarnation.⁸² [25]

While retaining reverence for the Septuagint as the work of the Holy Spirit, Isidore attested to the growth in Jerome's authority and perceived place in providential history. In *De officiis* he again tells of how 'the scribe Ezra, inspired by the Holy Spirit, restored all these books after the burning of the law by the Chaldeans [. . .] and corrected all the volumes of the prophets, which had been corrupted by the gentiles', and that 'after Ezra, the seventy translators produced the first translation from Hebrew into Greek'. He notes the plethora of Latin versions from the Greek but 'only Jerome the priest has turned the sacred Scriptures from Hebrew into Latin; and, generally speaking, all the churches use his version constantly, because of the greater accuracy of its renderings, and the great clarity of its words'.⁸³

These traditions suggest that the epigraph over the Amiatinus portrait – *Codicibus sacris hostili clade perustis / Esdra Deo feruens hoc reparavit opus* – need not be narrowly read as a literal caption to an anachronistic picture of Ezra. Rather, it announces that 'hoc opus' is to be found in the Latin Bible it prefaces. In the Codex Amiatinus it refers to Ezra's work directly recovered from the Hebrew truth through Jerome's translation. Such a *titulus* could conceivably have been used earlier to preface a Hieronymian revision of the Latin text or one corrected against Jerome's translations, such as the texts suggested by Cassiodorus's descriptions of the *codex grandior* and the *novem codices*. Any implied comparison of Ezra's work or of Jerome's with that of Cassiodorus or Ceolfrith sets their role in the context of the continuing providential renewal of divine revelation, rather than their personal glorification, and is compatible with a reading of the juxtaposed scribal picture which emphasises its concern with the interpretation of the biblical text. It

81 Kessler, *The Illustrated Bibles from Tours*, pp. 84–95, figs. 130, 132.

82 *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, p. 4.

83 Isidore (ed. C.M. Lawson), *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 113, Turnhout, 1989, i, pp. 12–13.

may be objected that Ezra's establishment of the *Hebraica veritas*, its translation into Greek by the Seventy and into Latin by Jerome all refer to the Old Testament, yet the picture below the inscription shows the complete library of Scripture and prefaces a complete Bible, a point which has been central to the foregoing discussion of the Early Christian image of the *armarium*. Is there any evidence to suggest the inscription may have been read as referring to Ezra's relationship not simply with the Law or the Old Testament, but with the whole of Scripture?

Esdra deo feruens

It has long been known that Alcuin quotes the couplet in his *Carmina* 69, describing a Bible laid out *per cola et commata*, like the Amiatinus. Karen Corsano suggested he may have seen one of the sister pandects with a similarly inscribed frontispiece.⁸⁴ The poem's description of the form and content of a great pandect is a literary device for disclosing the spiritual meaning of all the books of Scripture, in the manner of Jerome's Epistle 53. It reveals the presence of Christ in the Old Testament books as well as the New. Alcuin quotes the couplet at the end of his poem, in a way which highlights its epigrammatic quality. Most obviously it refers to the enemy fire which destroyed the sacred books and to their physical repair or restoration through Ezra's zeal. But *feruens* can also evoke the idea of Ezra himself on fire for God in renewing *hoc opus* (which is not specified [26] as simply the Law or the Old Testament). Alcuin adds the hope that by reading *hoc opus*, his reader too might be inflamed:

*Codicibus sacris hostili clade perustis
Esdra deo feruens hoc reparauit opus
Hoc opus, hoc etenim flammis te subtrahit atris,
O lector, si tu pacis amore legis.*⁸⁵

The context implies that Alcuin read the Ezra couplet as having something to say not simply about the reconstitution of the Old Testament, but about the interpretation of the whole of Scripture, to which his poem offers the reader a guide.

In his guide to all the books of Scripture in Epistle 53, which often served as a biblical preface, Jerome's list of Old Testament books culminates in Ezra and

⁸⁴ Corsano, 'The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus', pp. 20–22.

⁸⁵ E. Dümmler (ed.), *Poeta Latini Aevi Carolini*, Berlin, 1881, pp. 288–92. The editor notes an echo of Juvenecus in the penultimate line. Love of peace here is not simply in antithesis to the literal flames of the enemy. *Fervens*, like *ardens*, can be used in describing one who loves God and, because God cannot be fully seen or known in this life, it can also evoke love or ardent longing for heaven or the heavenly Jerusalem (= *visio pacis*). Seeing God revealed in his word – through the spiritual interpretation of Scripture – is therefore an anticipation of seeing him fully revealed in glory in heaven. Scriptural images of fire which are regularly cited in this context in patristic literature include Psalm 38:4, Luke 12:49 and especially Luke 24:32.

Nehemiah; he sketches its story of the return of the Israelites to their native land and the restoration of the Temple, emphasising that these events conceal a hidden meaning: *aliud in cortice praeferunt, aliud retinent in medulla*. Jerome breaks off at this point to declare his rapturous love of the Scriptures. After briefly reviewing the New Testament, he exhorts his reader to seek ‘that knowledge which will continue with us in heaven’ by searching for the meaning of the scriptural books: ‘to live among these books, to meditate upon them, to know nothing else, to seek nothing else. Does not such a life seem to you a foretaste of heaven here on earth?’⁸⁶

Bede’s commentary on Ezra specifically acknowledges the influence of Jerome’s interpretation of Ezra in Epistle 53, a text whose role in the Codex Amiatinus’s opening quire and importance in articulating the whole concept of the *sanctarum scripturarum armarium* have already been discussed. Bede dedicated the commentary to his priestly friend Acca, bishop of Hexham, a learned theologian who had ‘built up a very large and most noble library’ and who actively encouraged Bede to use his learning to build up an educated pastorate by expounding the Scriptures. In the Prologue Bede refers to the summary of all the books of the Bible which Jerome had made. He quotes Jerome’s outline of the book of Ezra and uses Jerome’s image in describing his own intention of peeling back the husk of the letter to find, with Christ’s help, the deeper and more sacred kernel of the spiritual sense in the book of the holy Ezra:

something which will point to the Lord himself, and to his temple and city which we are, by means of prophetic figures whose meaning is none the less clear. In this undertaking we have certainly been very much helped by Jerome, the aforementioned teacher of the Church, in his commentary on the prophets who, in those events that Ezra and Nehemiah record, had foretold, through figures, the deeds of Christ and his Church.⁸⁷

The canonical book of Ezra presents him as a priest of the line of Aaron, but not as High Priest. Bede briefly describes Ezra reforming the priesthood, *pontificali auctoritate*,⁸⁸ perhaps to show his participation in the work of Christ, earlier [27] referred to as *pontifex secundum ordinem Melchisedech*. Bede describes Ezra as a priest, prophet, historian and scribe. Neither Jerome’s Epistle 53, however, nor Gildas’s designation of Esdras as *bibliotheca legis*, had mentioned Ezra’s scribal work. In Bede’s commentary alone, *Esdras scriba velox in lege Moysi* (Ezra 7:6) not only restores the sacred books but embodies patristic teaching on their spiritual interpretation.⁸⁹ Bede’s profile of Ezra offers a guide to discerning the New Testa-

86 Jerome, Ep. 53.8–10. In Ep. 60.11 Jerome says of one, who by constant reading and meditation had become ‘a library of Christ’, *Unde hic feruor, nisi ex amore Dei? Unde legis Christi indefessa meditatio nisi ex desiderio eius qui legem dedit?*

87 Bede, *In principium Genesis*, Praefatio, p. 2.

88 Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, p. 310.

89 Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, p. 318.

ment in the Old, the spirit within the letter of God's word and the significance of this for the whole people of God. Bede here articulates a major theme compressed within the Amiatinus's inscribed portrait of a scribe writing in front of an Ark-like *armarium* which is opened to reveal the whole of Scripture.

Scriba velox

In the *Historia Abbatum*, Bede's description of Abbot Ceolfrith, *religionis zelo feruens*, opens the chapter describing his doubling of the monastic library and addition of three copies of the new translation to add to the one copy of the old translation he had brought back from Rome. In the earlier *Vita Ceolfridi*, *feruens* is associated with the idea of being inflamed with the love and awe of God. The exemplary portrait of Ceolfrith given in the chapter before the account of his enlarging the monastic library and causing three pandects to be made describes him as *feruens zelo iustitie, flagrans amore simul timore diuino*.⁹⁰

Bede's likely involvement in the editing and correction of Ceolfrith's pandects⁹¹ and the concern with biblical history, textual criticism and the *Hebraica veritas* widely evident in his own exegesis provide a practical context: for his interest in the tradition of Ezra as editor. He twice presents the story of Ezra editing Scripture and devising a shorthand script as an explanation at a literal level of why, in Scripture, Ezra 'is called not just a scribe but a swift scribe': 'consequently it is written of him, "Ezra went up from Babylon and he was a swift scribe in the law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6)'. The text's spiritual interpretation which immediately follows in Bede's commentary, however, shows that this scholarly scribe was also divinely inspired:

Ezra the priest and swift scribe clearly represents the same Lord who came *not to dissolve the law but to fulfil it* (Matthew 5:17). And thus the Lord may be called correctly a scribe of the law of God or a swift scribe in the law of Moses, for it was he who gave the law to Moses (Ezra 7:6), he who taught the holy prophets all truth by the grace of his Spirit, he who subsequently inflamed [*accendit*] the minds of his elect in order to move them by his love to grasp and carry out the will of God the Father.⁹²

Prompted by the image of the *scriba velox* in Ezra 7:6, Bede uses two other scriptural images of the scribe in order to reveal how the promise of the New Covenant

90 *Vita Ceolfridi*, xix, p. 394; *Historia Abbatum*, xv, p. 379. J. McClure, 'Bede and the Life of Ceolfrid', *Peritia* 3, 1984, pp. 71–84, argues for Bede's authorship.

91 R. Marsden, 'Manus Bedae; Bede's contribution to Ceolfrith's Bibles', *Anglo-Saxon England* 27, 1998, pp. 65–85. The completion of the commentary on Ezra has been dated to c. 725 or after but, as noted, Bede's recorded interest in Ezra precedes this.

92 Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, p. 309 ([. . .] *ipse omnium mentes electorum mox ut suo amore tetigerit intellegendam faciendamque Dei patris voluntatem accendit*).

is already contained in the Old and how the Mosaic Law, which had been written on stone, is to be interiorised (cf. Deuteronomy 6:1–6): ‘And this is the testament which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord, giving my laws in their minds and on their hearts I will write them’ (Jeremiah 31:33, quoted [28] in Hebrews 10:16). The Psalmist makes a fine reference to this scribe when he says: ‘My tongue is the pen of a scribe writing swiftly’ (Psalm 44:2).⁹³

Bede applies the Psalm text to Ezra: ‘The tongue of a prophet was indeed the pen of a swift scribe for what the Lord taught him inwardly without any lapse of time [Ezra] then declared to men with his tongue and by outward demonstration, in time’. In his account of Ezra, *scriba velox in lege Moysi*, Bede deftly draws on a tradition of exegesis on Psalm 44:2, particularly Jerome’s commentary:

I must prepare my tongue as a stylus and a calamus so that by this instrument the Holy Spirit may write in the hearts of those who hear [. . .] My tongue, like a rapid scribe, by which we can understand a stenographer, will record by means of a kind of shorthand [*compendium signorum*] in the fleshly tablets of the heart the brief and concise word of the Gospel [cf. II Corinthians 3:3]. The law, given by the Mediator, was written with the finger of God, and if what was called to disappear was glorious, how much more appropriate is it that the Gospel, which was destined to remain, should be written by the Holy Spirit, making use of my tongue? (II Corinthians 3:1–16).⁹⁴

Cassiodorus refers his readers to Jerome’s commentary to supplement his own exposition of Psalm 44 and uses elements of the scribal image in the *Institutiones*.⁹⁵ Jerome’s ‘brief and concise word of the Gospel’ is illuminated by a conceit in Augustine’s treatment of the phrase *scriba velociter scribentis* in Psalm 44:2: he advises the reader to ponder what *velociter* really tells us of God, namely his swiftness in writing because he writes everything in one Word, in which nothing is omitted and all things are contained.⁹⁶ The shorthand image is variously used by all three Fathers commenting on Psalm 44:2 but Bede alone applies this Psalm text to Ezra, *scriba velox*. Ezra swiftly restored the text of the Scriptures by using a shorthand script and omitting some books (those excluded from the canon). He spiritually restored the Scriptures by being swift or ready to understand them and

⁹³ Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, p. 309.

⁹⁴ Jerome, Ep. 65.7.

⁹⁵ Psalm 44:2, Cassiodorus, *Expositio in psalmorum*, 98, pp. 403–04, 414. In his *Institutiones*, i.30.1, Cassiodorus describes the zealous scribe as one who by copying out the Lord’s precepts could preach to men with the hand alone and ‘unleash tongues with the fingers’; scribes ‘seem to imitate the action of the Lord, who, though it was expressed figuratively, note his Law with the use of his all-powerful finger’.

⁹⁶ Psalm 44:6, Augustine (eds. D.E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont), *Ennarrationes in psalmos*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vols. 38–40, Turnhout, 1956, 38, p. 496.

teach their meaning with his tongue. Ezra's tongue is therefore likened to the pen of the divine scribe who once wrote the Law in tablets of stone but who, in writing the gospel, inscribed the Law on men's hearts. Bede thus presents Ezra as a figure of the divine author of Scripture, not simply because he wrote out the literal letter but because he renewed it. Expounding Ezra 7:10, Bede shows that Ezra 'prepared his heart to investigate and rewrite the law of the Lord which a devouring fire had destroyed; indeed, he prepared it so that, when doing this, he might fulfil the law first and thereby open his mouth to teach others'.⁹⁷ He exhorted the returned exiles from Babylon to obey the Covenant which had been broken, moved them to penitence and taught them again the meaning of the Law of Moses.

In this work Bede shows that Ezra prefigured Christ, who reinterpreted the Mosaic Law and gave the New Covenant in the Sermon of the Mount. Christ too 'searched into the law of God' and fulfilled it when, having set aside the traditions of the scribes and pharisees who interpreted the Law only according to the letter, 'he drew out the sense of Holy Scripture insofar as the spiritual mysteries concealed within the outer covering of the letters were to be understood [29] mystically; for he showed that the teaching of the Gospels, which he himself brought to the world, were more perfect'.⁹⁸ He 'prepared his heart to investigate the Lord' by providing a human nature for his divinity. By becoming incarnate, Christ fulfilled the Law.

The Israelites' return from Babylon is already presented in canonical Scripture as a second Exodus and renewal of the Covenant, recalling the giving of the Law and Moses's building of the Tabernacle and establishment of its Aaronite priesthood and rites (Nehemiah 9). A telescoping of the chronological framework enables Ezra's proclamation of the Law of Moses to the people to be presented as part of the one act of restoration, encompassing the rebuilding of the temple and its worship, the restoration of its vessels, the cleansing of its priesthood, the repentance of the Jews and their reconstitution as a nation and as the people of God, obeying his word, so that he would once more dwell within his temple in their midst. Bede's commentary on Ezra shows all this as figuring the New Covenant and the place of God's presence with his people in the new temple, which is the body of Christ. For Bede, in seeking the spiritual kernel beneath the husk of the letter, the story of Ezra leading the Israelites' return to Jerusalem from their exile in Babylon tells of Christ entering the world at his Incarnation, freeing humankind from its bondage to sin and eventually bringing it home from earthly exile to the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem. But it also concerns the role of Ezra, whose name means 'the helper'. He is a figure of all the leaders and *doctores* of the Church who in knowing, living and teaching the Scriptures share in Christ's continuing work of bringing penitents back from the worldly preoccupations of

⁹⁷ Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, p. 311; *Et ipse autem typum domini saluatoris manifeste tenuit in eo quod sanctam renouauit scripturam*, ii, p. 336.

⁹⁸ Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, pp. 311–12; cf. pp. 336–37.

Babylon to build up the new temple of the Church on earth, which is patterned, like the Tabernacle in the clays of Moses, on the heavenly reality.

The Tabernacle revisited

Ezra's renewal of the Law given to Moses, however, does not entirely account for the apparent anomaly of including a diagram of the Tabernacle (Figure 1.1) rather than of the Temple in the opening quire of the Codex Amiatinus. In his commentaries *De tabernaculo* and *De templo* and in a homily for the feast of the dedication of his own monastery, Bede shows that *both* Tabernacle and Temple mystically represent the universal Church, from the Creation to the end of the world, and also offer a figure of the life to come. Each has particular lessons to teach, however: the Tabernacle designates the building up of the present Church; the Temple indicates its future completion in the heavenly Jerusalem. The Tabernacle was built by Moses in the wilderness on the way to the promised land and the Temple by Solomon, with the help of a gentile king, in that promised land; the rebuilding of the Temple on the return of the exiles from Babylon, aided by another gentile king, therefore draws on the image of both of the earlier sanctuaries.⁹⁹ Often the nomenclature is used very flexibly. The mention of God's Tabernacle 'in Jerusalem' in 1 Ezra 7:15, for example, is cross-referenced by Bede to the text, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men' (Revelation 21:3), and is described both as God's dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem and also as the place where he [30] deigns to dwell in time with his people who are holy pilgrims in the Church on the journey to Jerusalem.¹⁰⁰ Is there any reason to believe that the Amiatinus diagram of the Tabernacle may have carried such allusions?¹⁰¹

Comparison with another Insular diagram, in the Book of Armagh, c. 807, is instructive (Figure 1.4). Old Testament references to tabernacle and temple often merge with the image of the walled citadel of Jerusalem, and the New Testament vision of the heavenly Jerusalem itself incorporates references to the two earthly sanctuaries which prefigured it.¹⁰² It is built foursquare, recalling the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon (Revelation 21:6; 3 Kings 6:20); the four cardinal directions and twelve gates inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel recall the encampment of the twelve tribes, three on each side of the desert

99 Bede, *De tabernaculo*, ii, pp. 42–43, Bede, *De templo*, i, p. 148.

100 Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, pp. 314–15.

101 For a discussion of the Codex Amiatinus diagram and Judeo-Christian iconographic traditions see E. Revel-Neher, 'Du Codex Amiatinus et ses rapports avec les plans du Tabernacle dans l'art juif et dans l'art byzantin', pp. 6–17; B. Kühnel, 'Jewish symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle and Christian symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the Heavenly Tabernacle', *Jewish Art* 12–13, 1986–87, pp. 147–68 at pp. 152–54, 162–68.

102 For exegetical and iconographic uses of this ambiguity see B. Kühnel, 'From the Earthly City to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium', *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertums-kunde und Kirchengeschichte Supplement* 42, Rome, 1987, pp. 49–59, 112–65.



Figure 1.4 The Book of Armagh. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 52, fol. 170r. Photo by permission of the Trustees of Trinity College Library, Dublin.

Tabernacle, and Ezekiel's vision of the tribes and the Temple (Revelation 21:13: Numbers 2:3–31; Ezekiel 48:1–35). The plan of Jerusalem reproduced at the end of the Apocalypse in the Book of Armagh's New Testament, p. 170, ostensibly provides an aid to visualising the heavenly city's layout as described in the penultimate chapter, Revelation 21:10–22.¹⁰³ But its inscriptions conceal from the casual eye several differences from the literal text, notably in the disposition and the names of the tribes, which are further harmonised with those in the Old Testament prefigurings of the heavenly city. The plan is a suitably cryptic resolution of an ancient exegetical crux posed by the variant listings of the tribes in Numbers, Ezekiel and Revelation. It is explicitly cited by Origen, who recommended that

103 Dublin, Trinity College Library, Ms 52. J. Gwyn, *Liber Ardmachanus: the Book of Armagh*, Dublin, 1913, p. 355, reproduced as fol. 171r but the plan occurs on 170r. For this and other Insular uses of the image of the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries, particularly in the Book of Kells, see J. O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan genealogy', in *The Book of Kells* (ed.), F. O'Mahony, Aldershot, 1994, pp. 344–97 at pp. 377–81; C.A. Farr, *The Book of Kells. Its Function and Audience*, London, 1997, pp. 52–61.

anyone concerned to progress to divine things should contemplate Revelation's description of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem (that is, the entrance to eternal life) and find a guide to help him understand the symbolic meaning of the numbers and orientation of the encampments of the tribes around the Tabernacle in the Book of Numbers and in Ezekiel's vision of the Temple.¹⁰⁴

The Armagh plan symbolically presents this harmony of Scripture and its meaning. The names of the tribes are aligned with those of the twelve apostles, symbolising the universal Church. The inner rectangle with the caption *dns noster ihs xps* expounds Revelation 21:22 and reveals Christ himself to be the heavenly temple, prefigured in the two Old Testament sanctuaries. The identification of the heavenly sanctuary with Christ is also contained in the opening illustration of the Carolingian Apocalypse manuscript, Valenciennes, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 99, fol. 2. A foursquare plan is labelled as the holy Tabernacle and the names of the twelve tribes are arranged around the sanctuary, this time with the addition of Moses and Aaron, as in Numbers 3:38 and in the Amiatinus diagram. Shallow rectangular projections from the four sides of the Valenciennes plan contain the Latin names of the four cardinal directions, transforming the outline of the plan into an equilateral cosmological Cross.¹⁰⁵

In contrast to these highly schematic plans, the diagram in the Codex Amiatinus preserves the layout of the twelve tribes from Numbers 2:3–31.¹⁰⁶ Cassiodorus's diagram of the Tabernacle is generally assumed to have been influenced by Late Antique representations of the Tabernacle of the type surviving in post-Iconoclast works, including Byzantine Octateuchs and copies of the sixth-century *Christian Topography* ascribed to Cosmas Indicopleustes (from [31] which John Lowden has argued the Octateuch cycle was derived).¹⁰⁷ Several features which occur in individual images in the Cosmas-Octateuch cycle are combined within the single diagram of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus. Among them is the inscription of the Greek names of the four directions Anatole, Dysis, Arctos and Mesembria, which do not occur in the Exodus text. In the Byzantine diagrams the names are written in Greek on a small scale outside the perimeter of the Tabernacle court at the four cardinal points, representing the cosmological significance of the Tabernacle noted in the text of the *Christian Topography*.¹⁰⁸

104 Origen (trans. F. Crombie), *Contra Celsum*, Ante Nicene Fathers, series 4, 1885, reprint Grand Rapids 1994, Book 6, ch. 23, pp. 583–84.

105 Kühnel, *From the Earthly City to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, p. 162, fig. 124.

106 Except that the first named of each group of three, as in the Book of Armagh plan, is placed in the centre of each side of the sanctuary court.

107 Lowden, *The Octateuch*, pp. 86–93, figs. 126, 150. L. Brubaker, 'The relationship of text and image in the Byzantine manuscripts of Cosmas Indicopleustes', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 70, 1977, pp. 42–57 at pp. 47–50. Meyvaert summarises recent literature on the Tabernacle diagram, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 844–53, notes, fig. 2.

108 The four directions are not to be confused with the large single Greek letters spelling AULH written at the cardinal positions inside the curtained wall of the tabernacle court, K. Weitzmann and G. Galavaris, *The Monastery of St Catherine at Sinai. The Illustrated Greek Manuscripts*, 1,

The arcane cosmic tetragrammaton of the name of Adam, formed by the Latinised initial letters of these four directions, appears frequently in Augustine, was known to Bede and was particularly popular in Hiberno-Latin exegesis.¹⁰⁹ Some treatments of the *topos* focus on the sum of the numerical equivalents of the Greek letters forming Adam's name, forty-six; it was linked to Christ, the second Adam, who identified his incarnate and resurrected body with the Temple in Jerusalem, which the Jews said had taken forty-six years to build (John 2:18–21). Some commentators further noted that this gospel text must refer not directly to Solomon's Temple, but to its successor whose construction they related, with varying degrees of numerological and biological detail, to the growth of the human embryo. The parallel appears influentially in Augustine's *De diversis quaestionibus*; it was known to Cassiodorus who, in his commentary on Psalm 46, briefly noted that the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem was completed in the forty-sixth year, a number 'set down by the ancients' as referring to the number of days (46×6) which Christ spent in the womb of Mary.¹¹⁰ The gestation parallel is elaborated and forty-six is briefly related to the temple rebuilt in the time of 'Zorobabil, also called Esdras', the restorer, in the *Laterculus Malalianus* ascribed to Theodore of Canterbury.¹¹¹ Bede uses the parallel in two homilies referring to the temple that was rebuilt in forty-six years after the return from the Babylonian Captivity. In his commentary on Ezra, however, he integrates the *topos* in a full exegesis of the Temple, of the kind he repeatedly uses elsewhere as a paradigm of the various levels of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture.¹¹²

The Temple 'designates each and every elect soul; because it is indwelled by the spirit of Christ, it is rightly called his house or temple'. Collectively, the Temple refers to the whole Church, 'the congregation of the elect' and 'it is also the body of the Lord himself, who was born of the Virgin'. Bede comments that 'this

Princeton, 1990, p. 57, fig. 150. *Christian Topography* 5.36: W. Wolska-Conus (ed. and trans.), *Cosmas Indicopleustes. Topographie Chrétienne*, Sources chrétiennes, 141, 159, and 197, Paris, 1968–73, 159, pp. 58–74.

109 W. Berschin, 'Opus deliberatum ac perfectum: Why did the Venerable Bede write a second prose Life of Cuthbert?', in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, Woodbridge, 1989, pp. 95–102, nn. 9–16 for references. R. McNally, 'The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition', in Hiersemann (ed.), *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff*, Stuttgart, 1971, pp. 111–22 at pp. 115–16. Bischoff, 'Turning points in the history of Latin exegesis in the early Irish Church AD 650–800', in M. McNamara (ed.), *Biblical Studies. The Medieval Irish Contribution*, Dublin, 1976, pp. 74–160, cat. 11c, 14, 17 I, 23, 24, 29, 31.

110 Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* 56, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 44A, pp. 95–96; Cassiodorus, *Expositio in psalmorum*, 98, p. 424.

111 J. Stevenson (ed.), *Laterculus Malalianus*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 136–38; Bede (ed. D. Hurst), *Homeliae evangelii*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 122, Turnhout, 1965, Book ii, homilies 1 and 24, pp. 189, 247.

112 Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*, ii, p. 300; Bede (trans. G. Tannenhaus), *De schematibus et tropis*, in J.M. Miller, M. Frosier and T. Benson (eds.), *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*, Bloomington and London, 1973, pp. 96–122 at p. 121; Bede, *De templo*, i, p. 147; Bede, *Homiliae*, ii, homilies 1, 24 and 25. J. O'Reilly, introduction to S. Connolly (trans.), *Bede: On the Temple*, pp. xxviii–xxxiii.

figurative meaning is particularly apt because physiologists tell us that 46 is the number of days it takes for the human body in the womb to grow from conception to the formation of the limbs'. It was appropriate that the Temple, which 'would prefigure the body of the Lord or be the dwelling-place of the Lord, should be built in Jerusalem in the same number of years which it took in days for the same body of the Lord to grow in the womb of the most holy Virgin'.

In the Amiatinus diagram of the Tabernacle, unlike its counterparts in the Byzantine Cosmas-Octateuch manuscripts, the four Latinised names Anatol(e), Dysis, Arctos and Mesembria are written in strikingly large golden capitals and are placed *inside* the Tabernacle court. They are not all in their cardinal positions but aligned with the sanctuary, whose entrance, at the very centre of the image, is [33] marked with a tiny cross.¹¹³ The 'o' of Anatole is shown as a lozenge and aligned with the entrance to the outer court. The four names conceal the number forty-six and therefore suggest not simply the cosmological dimensions of the Old Testament Tabernacle as a prefiguring of the heavenly Jerusalem, but the idea of the Old Testament Temple as a prefiguring of the body of Christ (John 2:20).

The instructed reader, searching for Christ in the Scriptures, is thus guided to see that the diagram's realistic depiction of the Tabernacle, like the literal text of the Exodus description it illustrates, conceals an inner meaning. Spiritually interpreted, it demonstrates the harmony of the whole of Scripture in revealing Christ and the continuing implications of that revelation for the individual and for the whole community of believers. It can refer simultaneously to the two Old Covenant sanctuaries of the Tabernacle and Temple, which variously serve as images of Christ himself, of the Church of the New Covenant and the individual soul, and of the heavenly sanctuary of the New Jerusalem. The diagram offers a visual paradigm of the different levels of the interpretation of Scripture. The picture of the learned scribe invites the reader about to enter the great library of the Scriptures to approach, suitably cleansed and vested, as though entering the sanctuary to discern the word of God. [34]

113 J. O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells', pp. 368–70. The cross is noted by Revel-Neher in 'Du Codex Amiatinus et ses rapports avec les plans du Tabernacle dans l'art juif', pp. 16–17 and Kühnel, 'Jewish symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle', p. 166.

CELTIC ART AND THE GOSPEL

Celtic art, spirituality and religion: reading the evidence

The challenges of trying to understand early Irish art and religious writing have something in common. The *Life of Columba*, for example, written by Adomnán the ninth abbot of Iona (679–704), can be disconcerting for the modern reader expecting some transparent model of Christian living. Its portrait of Columba (Colum Cille), who founded the island monastery of Iona in 563, is not a historical biography or soul journey but a series of incidents divided into prophetic revelations, divine miracles and ‘appearances of angels and certain manifestations of heavenly brightness’. There is, apparently, little mention of Christ and the Church, of doctrine or belief. Columba is a wonder-working figure, awe-inspiring and sometimes alarming, able to command the elements, commune with angels and animals, battle with demons, foretell the future and see into the human heart.

The book and its author are also perplexing for the modern reader in search of an eco-friendly Celtic spirituality which is in harmony with cosmic forces and relatively untrammelled by the discipline, book-knowledge and moral code of a hierarchical Church. Adomnán told the abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow that he longed to follow in the footsteps of the blessed chief of the apostles and agreed in his heart with all that St Peter stood for; in the *Life of Columba* he declared that Columba merited to be renowned as far as Rome, ‘which is the chief of all cities’. The Venerable Bede, no less, reported that Adomnán was very learned in the Scriptures. In recent years scholars have come to recognise Adomnán’s sophisticated adaptation of literary conventions and rhetorical techniques which the Irish, though living outside the Roman Empire, had inherited from the Roman world of Late Antiquity, together with their Christianity and the written word itself. They assimilated not only the Latin Bible, but particular ways of reading it which were expounded in the large body of biblical interpretation or exegesis they received in the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

From the *Lives* of universally recognised saints such as Anthony, Martin and Benedict, Adomnán also selectively adapted themes to new and local contexts in order to demonstrate to his monks the virtues of humility, purity of heart, penitence and obedience to the abbot; he delineated sacred time by references to

the monastic office and the liturgical year. Many of the enigmatic episodes in Adomnán's account use the riddling techniques of the desert Fathers and require the reader to puzzle out the continuing implications for all the faithful of the [34] gospel precepts and events and their Old Testament prefigurings which are encoded within the stories concerning Columba. These episodes vividly evoke a sense of local place by references to early Irish dynastic history and folklore, by the use of Irish names of places and people, by glimpses of the topography of Iona, of seedtime and harvest, of coastal voyages in hazardous weather. God's continuing work of universal redemption in Christ is thus made present to Adomnán's island community at the ends of the earth through the *Life* of their own founding father.

Celtic art and the great gospel books of Durrow, Lindisfarne and Kells

Much of the art of the period poses similar teasing questions of identity and meaning. Is it essentially a Celtic pagan art beneath a Christian veneer? Is it Christian but of a peculiarly Celtic kind? Or is it a distinctively regional expression of beliefs shared throughout the universal Church? The great illuminated gospel books which typify this art certainly look very different from those produced anywhere else. Their unmistakable features are already well-developed in the earliest surviving complete example, the Book of Durrow, probably produced in the time of Adomnán. It highlights the initial letters of sections of the gospel text by enlargement, touches of colour or a dotted outline, and by the *diminuendo* effect of tapering the size of letters immediately following the enlarged initial. The result is to make the layout of each page individual. This effect is dramatically heightened on the first page of each of the four gospels, where the first letters of the first word are magnified and decorated, with the rest of the initial word and several of the following words written in large display letters, usually arranged in successive lines in a descending hierarchy of size and even different types of letter forms. The magnified letters are also lavishly embellished with abstract motifs drawn from the repertoire of native art, some of which may have had a particular symbolic significance in earlier contexts. The terminals of the letters of the gospel openings whirl into spirals ultimately derived from pre-Christian Celtic La Tène traditions; the letter stems are outlined and compartmentalised like the cell walls of jewellery and are filled with ornament. Such decorative intrusions into the integrity of the text, the distortion of letter forms and the eventual enshrinement of letters and their transformation into abstract images is quite alien to Roman traditions of book production. At the beginning and end of the Book of Durrow and before each of the four gospels there were carpet pages entirely covered with abstract ornament, each page differently designed. Much of the decoration simulates the techniques and abstract motifs of other media, recalling the effects of cloisonné, millefiori, enamel, glass studs, spiral bosses, stippling and panels of pierced fret used in native metalwork. The only figural art in the Book of Durrow consists of highly stylised renderings of the four animal symbols of the evangelists at the

beginning of the book and before each gospel. Greco-Roman pictorial traditions of narrative, perspective and three-dimensional illusion are entirely absent.

This is only part of the story, however. The coming of Christianity did not [35] simply mean the transfer of traditional Celtic art to the new medium of the book. First of all, it was neither a static nor an exclusively Celtic art but was energised and paradoxically brought to its greatest period of creativity and originality by cross-fertilisation with other traditions, both from neighbouring regions and from the Mediterranean world. Ireland was converted, from Britain and the continent, by a Church which had been formed in late Roman urban culture and had to adapt itself to the very different culture of rural barbarian societies and their ruling elites. This process meant that the Irish were particularly well-suited to convert other so-called barbarian or non-Roman peoples. They had a natural initial advantage over the Roman missionaries dispatched to Britain by Pope Gregory the Great and his successors in the task of converting the pagan Germanic Angles and Saxons who had invaded Britain after the Roman legions withdrew. Irish monks from Iona, as is well known, were to play a most prominent part in their conversion. It involved increased cultural contacts between neighbouring regions through the influx of Irish monks, sponsored by Irish-speaking Northumbrian kings, their establishment of Columban bases at Lindisfarne and elsewhere from the 630s and the movement of many Anglo-Saxons to Ireland to study the Scriptures and their interpretation.

What are often popularly referred to as Celtic manuscripts were produced in Ireland and within the area of northern Britain and parts of present-day Scotland spanned by the network of Columban monasteries centred on Iona, part of which had a long history of Irish settlement; in most cases it is not possible to assign precise locations to the manuscripts and scholars have resorted to the term 'Insular' to describe the art which marks them out as a group and unmistakably reveals the influence of scribes and manuscripts from the area on certain books produced in southern Britain and in continental scriptoria. The early Irish adaptation of Roman script into the beautiful distinctive script known as half uncial or Insular majuscule, which was used in the major Insular gospel books, was introduced to the Anglo-Saxons evangelised by the Irish. Anglo-Saxon craftsmen and artists in turn added to the pool of motifs produced by the existing metalworking peoples of the two islands – Irish, Picts and Celtic Britons. By the later seventh century there was a growing increase in cultural influences from Rome and Gaul reaching not just Canterbury and southern Britain, but parts of Northumbria and its areas of influence. Probably from the newly re-introduced Roman skills of building with dressed and mortared stone, the Anglo-Saxons developed sculpture in stone, anticipating the Irish high crosses. Native Insular motifs did not atrophy but continued to develop and to migrate from one region to another and from one medium to another, particularly from metalwork to stone and vellum. It has been shown, for example, that serpent bosses on metalwork influenced the use of that feature in the Book of Kells and on the sculpted stone crosses erected on Iona, and that the eucharistic vine included amongst the ornament on the Derrynaflan paten was

not necessarily imported for that commission as it had already been incorporated in Irish metalwork.

What is significant is that there is no surviving Insular gospel book which [36] features purely Celtic art. Anglo-Saxon animal interlace and rectilinear patterns, as well as parallels with Pictish animal art, are already found in the Book of Durrow, together with its magnificent curvilinear Celtic ornament. Furthermore, some of the book's decorative features, such as the interlaced cross-carpet frontispiece, are not Insular in origin at all but are derived from Christian art from the continent and even from the eastern Mediterranean, sometimes through western intermediaries; portable objects such as manuscripts, bookcovers, pictures, reliquaries, altar plate and precious textiles brought with them a range of images and styles. Some attracted Insular artists and patrons more than others. They were pre-disposed to respond to symbolic and iconic images rather than to the narrative and didactic. Durrow's striking figure of St Matthew's symbol, a man enveloped in a chequered cloak, his head and body facing the viewer but his feet turned sideways, compares closely with standing evangelist portraits in a gospel book from Armenia. The inscribed evangelist portraits in the Lindisfarne Gospels seem partly inspired by Byzantine iconography, quite possibly from a gospel book which had been in the library of Cassiodorus in sixth-century Italy. The Book of Kells, often regarded as the epitome of Celtic art, is the most eclectic of all: its many depictions of peacocks, lions and vine-scrolls, for example, patently did not originate in native tradition. Such features were not slavishly copied from other works, however, but were quite transformed and exuberantly assimilated into the Insular repertoire and idiom.

The assumption that the art of these books is essentially a pagan Celtic art transferred to a new medium can be questioned not only by such analysis of the art itself, but by a study of its relationship to the text it ornaments and the larger context in which that text was produced and used. This does not, of course, preclude the likelihood that certain motifs, such as the lozenge or the spiral, carried resonances from their pre-Christian use, impossible though this is to define with any precision. Some scholars have associated the apotropaic function of interlace placed in key positions such as thresholds with the function of interlace placed at gospel openings or in carpet pages facing the entrance to the sacred text. There is evidence of the talismanic function of some of the gospel books themselves, particularly as the associated relics of saints. One such book was actually riveted inside the Lough Kinale book-shrine.

Moreover, the phenomenon of lavishly embellishing the pages of gospel books with abstract ornament derived from metalwork motifs may, like the treasure covers or shrines some of the books once had, be understood partly in terms of a gift-giving society in which gifts to God and his saints by great monastic patrons rivalled and surpassed gifts of fine metalwork customarily made to kings. But none of these considerations can explain the fact that, despite all kinds of variation between individual Insular gospel books, they share important characteristics, not only in their style and decorative vocabulary but in their preoccupation with the

sign of the Cross and the evangelist symbols, their emphasis on the prefatory canon tables and their highlighting of a particular range of passages in the gospel text, including the gospel openings, the genealogies of Christ and especially Matthew 1:18. [37]

The spiritual interpretation of Scripture and the art of the gospel books

The difficulty has been to find a viable methodology for ascribing ‘meaning’ to a largely abstract art, rather than projecting onto it the subjective interpretation of the modern viewer. While it is possible that some of the decorated passages in the gospel books may have marked liturgical readings, very little is known about what non-Roman lection system was in use. In recent years, however, there has been important research on the theological and exegetical writing of early Irish scholars, including Ailerán, Columbanus and Adomnán, and a great increase in the available amount of other written evidence about how contemporaries read and interpreted Scripture. A large body of Latin biblical interpretation surviving in continental Carolingian manuscripts has been identified as of Irish origin, or influence. These works include a number of gospel commentaries which reveal extraordinary knowledge of the text and a vigorous interest in its interpretation by the Fathers, but also a practical understanding of the rhetorical techniques they used and a predilection for certain themes.

The Hiberno-Latin Gospel commentaries show their writers were familiar with the concept that divinely inspired Scripture has a hidden spiritual meaning which cannot be attained by human reason and knowledge alone, important though these may be in clarifying the literal text. Understanding the inner meaning is an act of spiritual discernment, impossible without divine grace. Many of the apparent difficulties, contradictions and obscurities in Scripture, it was believed, were there to keep certain kinds of reader hungry; puzzling over the mystery could lead to apprehension at a more profound level of known truths more openly expressed elsewhere in Scripture. This is emphatically not an invitation to invent one’s own religion. Rather, it envisages that readers in different states of spiritual readiness might therefore ‘see’ different dimensions of their shared beliefs revealed in a particular scriptural text. Properly interpreted, the apparent difficulties of the literal text could act as signs to the spiritual realities concealed within it and open up its continuing meaning concerning Christ and his Church, the inner life of the individual reader and the heavenly life to come. Important among such signs or mysteries in the text was Scripture’s use of numbers, Hebrew names and the divine names.

Patristic guides to the interpretation of the text often used the language of paradox and metaphor, with recourse to the arguments of etymology and numerology. These may now seem arcane techniques but were practised by patristic guardians of orthodox belief, including Augustine and Jerome, who had a formidable degree of learning. Irish biblical commentators made these techniques their own and their treatment of the gospel text is of interest in trying to understand what the art of the

Insular gospel books might have suggested for contemporaries. The gospel books do not offer didactic presentations of doctrine, or even narrative, but the ancient traditions of abstract art on which they drew, when combined with the traditions of spiritual interpretation sketched here, were peculiarly suited to the formation of powerful symbolic and iconic images [38] which can prompt meditation leading to further, deeper recognition of known truths.

Text and image: (1) gospel harmony and the four living creatures

The most fundamental apparent difficulty in the gospels tackled by patristic and Insular commentators is their very number and the manifest differences between the four of them. Much ingenuity was expended on showing that the testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were the individual but harmonious facets of a single fourfold gospel. The Old and New Testament visions of four winged creatures who attend and acclaim the divine throne (Ezekiel:4–26; Revelation 4:6–8) were read as demonstrations of the divine authority underlying the fourfold gospel, and the four evangelists came to be paired with the four symbolic beasts – the man, lion, calf and eagle – in the order to which Jerome’s Vulgate gave authority in the late fourth century. Each gospel, as mysteriously epitomised in its opening lines and characterised by the nature of its symbolic beast, was seen as particularly revelatory of one aspect of Christ’s indivisible identity – his humanity, kingship, priesthood and divinity. In a passage quoted by Irish commentators, Gregory the Great related the symbolic beasts to the stages of redemption when he evocatively spoke of Christ becoming a man at his Incarnation, a sacrificial calf at his Passion, a lion at his Resurrection, and an eagle at his Ascension. The importance of the number four established by biblical texts was underscored by the Church’s early appropriation, long before the conversion of the Irish, of the existing cosmological concepts of the ancient world in which time, space and matter were seen as part of a harmonious universe. The quadripartite form of creation – the four seasons of the year, the four winds or cardinal directions, the four elements of earth, air, fire and water and their properties, the four humours of the human microcosm – was seen by Christian commentators as an expression of the divine Wisdom who had ordered all things ‘in measure, number and weight’ (Wisdom 11:2). The Wisdom image was particularly used to comment on the opening of St John’s Gospel and the recognition of Christ as the Creator-Logos.

A whole-page picture of the four symbolic beasts filling the four angles of an equilateral Cross appears at the beginning of some Insular gospel books and probably prefaced each of the four gospels in the Lichfield Gospels and the Book of Kells. The designs immediately convey a sense of the mysterious and the numinous, but for an initiated reader could also present a composite portrait of Christ, whose identity is revealed in his fourfold gospel, as in his quadripartite creation. The image is especially powerful in the version prefacing John’s Gospel in Kells, where the Cross is depicted diagonally as a great X shape, evoking the letter *chi*,

the initial letter of Christ's title in Greek. The four beasts are here depicted at the four cardinal points of the design, not in the corners, and the Cross is marked at its centre with a large rhomboid or lozenge shape, a four-sided symbol of the earth much older than Christianity, but preserved in medieval copies of schematised antique maps of the quadripartite world and used in Early Christian art as a cosmological symbol of Christ. The only other full-page use of this [39] combined *chi*-Cross and the lozenge in the Book of Kells is at the announcement of the Incarnation in Matthew, a text which in patristic and Insular commentaries was directly harmonised with St John's opening account of the Creator-Logos.

A large amount of exegesis on the four gospels is actually contained in the gospel books as prefatory material, most notably the canon tables which were richly ornamented and often set out under arcades. The ten tables of Roman numerals, covering up to sixteen pages, list the numbers of gospel sections (corresponding with the numbers marked in the margin of the gospel text) in parallel columns to demonstrate which passages were contained in all four gospels, or in any three or two of them, and which passages were unique to each gospel. They were designed to show both the distinctive nature of each gospel's testimony and their fourfold harmony. The canon tables were usually introduced by a copy of the letter Jerome had written when he dedicated his revision of the Latin translation of the gospel text to the pope and affirmed the four canonical gospels, neither more nor less, as the divinely inspired measure for orthodox belief. A number of Insular gospel books, including the Lindisfarne Gospels, also contain an extract from Jerome's introduction to his commentary on Matthew's Gospel, which offers a detailed exposition on the four evangelists, their gospel openings and the symbolic meaning of their pairings with the winged creatures from the two biblical theophanies. The Hiberno-Latin gospel commentaries discuss the canon tables and all the prefatory material found in the gospel books.

In the Book of Kells the omission of the section numbers from the margins of the gospel text makes the arcaded canon tables useless for all practical reference purposes, and yet they form one of the most magnificent extended sequences of decoration in the whole book. The winged creatures are shown in various permutations over the lists of canons, their harmony suggested by their close groupings, exchanged gestures, glances and even hybrid forms. They simultaneously evoke the apocalyptic vision of Christ's divinity and the four earthly evangelists who describe his Incarnation. In Revelation 4:8 the four beasts acclaim Christ in the triple Sanctus of the heavenly liturgy. Their pervasive presence in a great liturgical gospel book, which enthroned on the altar would itself have been a Christ-bearing image, is peculiarly appropriate. Apart from the canon tables there are only two other such extended decorative sequences in the Book of Kells: the two accounts of Christ's genealogy in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Their many differences from each other made them a common subject for patristic and Insular commentators, who demonstrated that the literal texts, spiritually interpreted, are complementary entirely and reveal respectively the royal and priestly descent of the same Christ.

Text and image: (2) the *chi-rho* in the Book of Kells

The Book of Kells takes to extremes the Insular tendency to devote more and more space to fewer and fewer words at traditional key points in the gospel text, most notably the gospel openings, which are given the decorative density of carpet [40] pages. Words, hidden and rendered almost illegible by the distortion and ornamentation of the letter forms and ambiguous spatial relationships with their multiple frames, become images. Such decorative veiling and metamorphosis of the text provides some visual parallel to the concept that the literal text of Scripture conceals a hidden meaning. Common to the decoration of all the Insular gospel books are two pictorial conventions, long-established in the early Christian art of the Mediterranean world, whereby the Cross and Christ's title in Greek (rendered in abbreviated form as X or as XP) were used as aniconic symbols of his risen glory. They are magnified and resplendently displayed on the cross-carpet and *chi-rho* pages but are also depicted on a tiny scale, concealed in the decoration. The Cross is frequently revealed in the interstices of the interlace, as though it lies beneath the ornament, undergirding it. It is not visible to the casual eye, but once found it leaps out of the design and its discovery in one place leads the reader actively to seek it elsewhere.

The famous *chi-rho* page and its context in the Book of Kells may give a final hint of the thought-world in which this art was produced. The first seventeen verses of Matthew's Gospel, listing the names of the forty-two generations of Christ's human ancestors, do not generally command the attention of the modern reader. The function of genealogies in establishing a history, an identity and claims of status, however, was well understood in early Irish society. Hiberno-Latin commentaries outstripped the Fathers of the Church in producing lengthy expositions of the gospel genealogy, showing that the etymologies of the Hebrew names and their very number concealed clues to the nature of Christ, redemption and the life of the faithful. They treated the genealogy as a separate book, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham', which symbolically epitomised the whole gospel. The practice is reflected in the Insular gospel books which decoratively highlighted and increasingly isolated those seventeen verses and then treated verse 18 with all the ornamental elaboration of a second gospel opening. In the Book of Kells an entire page is devoted to the embellishment of the opening two words of the genealogy, *Liber generationis*, and the listing of the ancestral names continues over five pages. Matthew 1:17 is separated from the next verse by a blank double opening and, in the present pagination, by two illuminated pages, including a cross-carpet page whose terminal bosses marvellously simulate the metalwork of a shrine. Originally it was probably positioned directly opposite the opening of the next verse in Matthew's text, which announces the Incarnation and begins with Christ's title.

The sacred name, abbreviated in the letters *chi* and *rho*, followed by the Latin ending, appears as *Xpi* and occupies the page, the initial X spanning its length and breadth. The four curved arms of the letter flow outwards from the centre and

from their terminals spin myriad roundels, spirals and trumpet patterns, bringing the whole design to life. The motifs are ultimately derived from the art of Celtic prehistory, recharged through the calligrapher's art and combined on the same page with interlace, fret and vine-scroll into a new visual language. The complex [41] centre of the *chi* conceals the distorted outline of an equilateral stepped Cross, but is dominated by a rhomboid cosmological symbol. Gradually, the viewer discerns creatures of earth, sea and sky concealed in the dense surrounding decoration – cats and mice, an otter with a salmon its jaws, angels and a moth. The second letter in the name of Christ stems from a golden Cross and burgeons into the image of a youthful human face. The page approaches the unimaginable as no figural scene of the Nativity ever could: the Christ whose birth is heralded at this point in the gospel text, and whose human ancestors are enrolled in the foregoing pages is, in a single word, revealed to be the Redeemer of the world and its divine Creator. [42]

THE ART OF AUTHORITY

The utter remoteness of the islands at the north-westerly limits of the ocean and the barbarian nature of their inhabitants was a commonplace or *topos* in the work of Roman poets and historians. They therefore regarded the partial conquest of Britain, the largest in the skein of islands at the furthest edge of the inhabited world, as a symbol of Rome's universal dominion and civilising role. Christian commentators living in the Empire, however, adapted this secular image of the centrality of Rome in the light of the very different biblical tradition that Jerusalem was the centre of the earth. Old Testament prophecies had announced that the glory of the God of Israel would one day be revealed to all peoples, even to idolatrous Gentiles throughout 'the multitude of isles' (Psalm 96:1; Isaiah 49:1), 'from sea to sea [. . .] unto the ends of the earth' (Psalms 71:8; 18:5); the New Testament saw this fulfilled in the coming of Christ and in the continuing apostolic task of taking the gospel from Jerusalem to all the world (e.g. Acts 13:47, quoting Isaiah 49:6; Romans 10:18, quoting Psalm 18:5).

When St Patrick evangelised beyond the frontier of the Roman Empire, he presented his mission to the Irish as a latter-day fulfilment of these Scriptural prophecies and of Christ's explicit final command that his disciples should teach all peoples (*omnes gentes*) and baptise them in the name of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19–20, 24:14), bearing witness 'even to the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Patrick proclaimed: 'As we have seen it written, so we have seen it fulfilled: behold, we are the witnesses that the Gospel has been preached to the limit beyond which no-one dwells'.

Patristic writers (the Fathers of the Church) came to regard Roman imperial rule as a providential preparation for the coming of Christ [141] and the triumph of a far greater and more truly universal dominion. From the combined traditions of imperial Rome and Judeo-Christian Jerusalem there developed the concept that Rome, refounded from Jerusalem by the princes of the apostles, St Peter and St Paul, and sanctified by their martyrdom, was the earthly centre of Christ's spiritual empire, even though the city ceased to be the capital of the Roman Empire. Papal initiatives in the spiritual conquest and successive conversions of the islands and peoples on the western periphery of the known world were, therefore, to have a key symbolic role in the development of this concept of Rome, but it was the

ready response of Insular writers which gave it life. In a letter to Pope Boniface IV in 613, Columbanus described Peter and Paul as fulfilling the Psalmist's prophecy: 'Their voice has gone out into every land and their words to the ends of the earth' (Psalm 18:5); he acknowledged the papal successors of the holy apostles as the first deliverers of the Catholic faith to the Irish and recognised Rome as 'the head of the Churches of the world, saving the special privilege of [Jerusalem], the place of the Lord's resurrection'.

Over a century later, Bede made sophisticated use of the Roman, biblical and patristic strands of the *topos* in his account of the various conversions and reconversions of regions and peoples within 'the multitude of the isles'. In the *Ecclesiastical History* he quoted Gregory the Great's claim that the Ocean and barbarous Britain, which had never been entirely subdued by Roman force of arms, had peaceably submitted to Christian preachers. Bede elsewhere presented Pope Gregory himself as fulfilling Christ's final command to the apostles to evangelise all peoples when in 597 he sent out Augustine and other missionaries from Rome to the new inhabitants of Britain who had not known Roman imperial rule. Bede quoted a letter of Boniface V applying the texts of Psalm 18:5 and Matthew 28:20 to the evangelising work of Justus, the third Roman archbishop of Canterbury, when he sent him the pallium, the sign of his office, in 624 and authorised the consecration of more bishops, that the Gospel might be preached 'among all those peoples who are not yet converted'.

The memory of how the gospel had also been taken from one part of the periphery to another, that is, from Britain to Ireland and then from Ireland and Iona to the Picts and Anglo-Saxons, was to be selectively accommodated within this Rome-centred model of conversion or spiritual conquest. Writers from various regions within the [142] Atlantic archipelago assimilated the layered *topos* of Rome and the ends of the earth, like other aspects of the literary heritage they had received with their Christianity from the Mediterranean world. But they also adapted and transformed it, and in a variety of ways and contexts which are of direct relevance in interpreting contemporary accounts of Insular art and building. This conceptual framework also offers some insight into the surviving evidence of Insular artistic responses to the Judeo-Christian culture of the late Roman world and the role of interchanges between the Insular peoples in the formation of the repertoire of Insular art. The present chapter explores these themes by comparing contemporary descriptions and examples of the art of the Northumbrian Anglo-Saxon *Romani* with the art of the Insular gospel books.

The *Romani*, art and building in the Roman manner

At the heart of the conversion and the art it inspired was the coming of the Latin Bible and of patristic exegesis, that is, of particular ways of interpreting the literal text and its underlying meaning which, for a literate elite, informed an entire world view. Insular writers refashioned Rome's stock image of conquering and civilising the barbarous periphery, not simply to describe the Church's peaceable

conversion of their island forefathers from paganism to the rudiments and external forms of the faith, but to persuade their own Christian contemporaries of the need for submission to a more thoroughgoing spiritual conquest. Obedience to God's will presupposed the authoritative interpretation of the divine word. In the developing Insular Christian culture of the seventh and early eighth centuries, the argument focused on the interpretation of the problematic biblical evidence for the date of celebrating Easter. Insular writers showed that the process of interpretation was inextricably bound up with core beliefs and a fuller realisation of membership of the universal Church symbolised by Rome. Insular *Romani* dwelt not on the recent nature of papal sanctioning of the so-called Roman Easter in the early seventh century, but on Petrine Rome's role in safeguarding [143] both the unity of the Church and the revelation of the full deposit of faith, handed to the apostles and divinely unfolded within the Church over time.

Insular *Romani* presented certain fellow islanders and fellow believers who obdurately clung to their own local customs on the dating of Easter, rather than follow universal 'Roman' practice, as being spiritually on the edge of the Christian world. This reuse of the old *topos* of Rome's centrality was not about ethnicity and geography: centre and periphery were here habitations of the mind. Thus at the synod of Whitby, Wilfrid criticised the Columban monks and implicitly those Anglo-Saxons who followed them, as well as the Picts and the Britons, 'who in these, the two remotest islands of the Ocean, and only in some parts of them, foolishly attempt to fight against the whole world'. It was essential for Wilfrid in 664, as for the Irishman Cummian exhorting Ségéne of Iona in similar terms to observe a Roman Easter over thirty years earlier, to show that their own remoteness from the physical centre of the Roman Christian world did not mean that they too were backwoodsmen. They supported the case for a particular interpretation of Scripture concerning the celebration of Easter by citing authoritative texts of the Fathers and decisions of Church councils, received from 'the centre', as well as the eyewitness experience of the delegation from southern Ireland (631) and of Wilfrid (c. 653), who had travelled to Rome and seen how things were done in the chief of cities.

The desire to demonstrate familiarity with Rome as the touchstone of orthodoxy by acquiring and emulating things Roman is evident in the written and archaeological record of Wilfrid's prodigious artistic patronage. He brought in stonemasons and craftsmen and used Roman building types and architectural decorative motifs from the Continent; he built aisled and columned churches of dressed stone at Hexham and at Ripon and a crypt incorporating inscribed Roman stones. At York he restored the stone church founded by the Roman mission, which his biographer implies had fallen into ruin under the Columbans, and for Ripon he obtained endowments including lands confiscated from the Britons, while the site itself had earlier been given by King Alhfrith to Columban monks, who had abandoned it rather than accept 'the catholic Easter and the other canonical rites of the Roman and apostolic church'. Wilfrid's biographer presents him as the vanquisher of those 'whom the Apostolic See does not receive [144] into communion', and

quotes the *acta* of Pope Agatho's synod (679) where Wilfrid had later undertaken to sign a confession of the Catholic faith 'on behalf of the whole northern part of Britain and Ireland, together with the islands inhabited by the Angles and Britons, as well as by the Irish and Picts'. He embellished his churches with altar plate, furnishings, altar hangings of gold and Tyrian purple and ornaments of precious metalwork, including a cross of gold at St Peter's, Ripon, described in his Latin epitaph there as a *tropaeum* or victory trophy. The accounts read like entries from the contemporary Roman *Lives of the Popes*, where the founding and embellishing of churches in Rome on an imperial scale of patronage were prominent amongst the deeds recorded of successive popes and helped visually to identify Papal Rome with ancient tradition.

Rosemary Cramp has demonstrated the general *imitatio* of Rome implicit in the layout of St Peter's at Wearmouth founded c. 673 and St Paul's at Jarrow, c. 681, in the proportions of their high basilican churches, which recall those of Roman churches such as Santa Maria in Cosmedin, and in specific features such as the *porticus* (in this context meaning a covered way). Bede records that Benedict Biscop sought out masons in Francia, c. 671, 'to build him a stone church in the Roman style he had always loved so much', and also glaziers, 'craftsmen as yet unknown in Britain', who taught the English their skills. The Anglo-Saxons drew not only on the city of Rome but on the common vocabulary of Roman building types and ornament used by the Western Church. The archaeological evidence documents their use of Roman techniques and materials – dressed and mortared stone, poured concrete, painted plaster, lathe-turned baluster shafts, coloured window glass, porphyry, stone inscriptions and a range of architectural ornamental motifs, including vine-scroll, as well as the remarkable development of figural sculpture in relief on free-standing monuments.

There was, however, regional diversity. Although the existence of Irish *Romani* long pre-dates the synod of Whitby, churches in Ireland were typically of wood: later stone churches often simulated features of hallowed wooden buildings. Nor can the large-scale use of stone at Hexham, Ripon and Wearmouth-Jarrow be taken as typical of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. Furthermore, Wilfrid's biographer and Bede cannot be cited without qualification as evidence that the Anglo-Saxon *Romani* identified orthodoxy on Easter with building in stone. Certainly, [145] Bede's account of the development of ecclesiastical authority and unity in the second phase of conversion or spiritual conquest after the synod of Whitby documents increasing Roman cultural influences, including building in stone. As Gaul had influenced Romanising Northumbrian patrons, Wearmouth-Jarrow in turn became a Romanising centre of influence for the Picts. When King Nechtan adopted the Catholic time of keeping Easter, in order to make the change (from Columban practice) 'with greater authority', he sought help from the English, who 'had long since based their religious practices on the example of the holy Roman and apostolic Church'. He asked Ceolfrith of Wearmouth-Jarrow for further information on Easter and the tonsure, but also for masons to be sent to build a church of stone 'after the Roman fashion', and vowed that he and his people

would always ‘follow the customs of the holy Roman and apostolic Church, so far as they could learn them, remote though they were from the Roman people and their language’. In responding to Nechtan’s three requests, Ceolfrith distinguished between the Roman celebration of Easter, derived from a spiritual interpretation of Scripture and bound up with orthodox belief, and the Roman tonsure. He explained how he had strongly recommended to Adomnán of Iona (who followed the Roman Easter) the form of tonsure which imitates Christ’s crown of thorns as a fitting outward sign whereby ‘we, who desire to be saved by Christ’s Passion, wear with Peter the sign of the Passion’. But Ceolfrith stressed that difference over the form of tonsure, which arises from historical circumstances, ‘is not hurtful to those whose faith in God is untainted and their love for their neighbour sincere’.

Similarly, Ceolfrith’s disciple, Bede, shows that building in the universal Roman manner could fittingly proclaim the most recently converted peoples at the ends of the earth to be members of the universal Church, but warns that it could never provide or replace the irrefutable proof of membership demonstrated by love of God and neighbour. Bede’s account of the Whitby synod itself, for example, honours Aidan’s memory and is framed by a laudatory treatment of the community at Lindisfarne, whose church, though built ‘after the Irish method, not of stone but of hewn oak’, was later enshrined rather than replaced. Bede pictured Cuthbert heroically advancing to a battlefield beyond Lindisfarne and conquering a remote, demonhaunted island further out in the limitless ocean, where he ‘built a [146] city fitted for his *imperium*’. Bede subverted the Roman *topos*, however, by specifying that Cuthbert’s *civitas* on Farne was built not of cut stone or bricks and mortar, but of turf and boulders with a roof of rough-hewn timber and straw, and that the saint stuffed the cracks in the planks of the oratory walls with mud and straw. Though Cuthbert was English and, by this stage, observed the Roman Easter, he was ‘more concerned with the splendours of his heavenly than his earthly abode’. The *civitas* on Farne did not by its outward form evoke any earthly city; rather, the life of the holy man lived within it was patterned on the life of the heavenly city to come.

The surviving art of Lindisfarne also challenges stereotypical contrasts of English and Irish, *Romani* and Columban, Roman and barbarian. Like Wearmouth-Jarrow and Hexham, Iona and Lindisfarne testify to the seventh-century cult of the Virgin, which had been promoted in Rome before the formal establishment of the four Marian feasts by Pope Sergius (687–701). It has been suggested that paintings acquired from Rome by Benedict Biscop for Wearmouth may have inspired the depiction of the Virgin and apostles on St Cuthbert’s wooden coffin reliquary at Lindisfarne; the pose of the Virgin and Child provides the closest surviving comparison for that in the later Columban Book of Kells. Bede’s prologue to the *Life of Cuthbert* testifies to close relations between his community and Lindisfarne. The scene of Christ in majesty on Cuthbert’s coffin lid, like that in the Codex Amiatinus, a highly Romanised biblical manuscript produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow, has a similar though not identical reconciliation of two Mediterranean types of the evangelist symbols. The Lindisfarne Gospels, like other Insular gospel books, has ornament derived from native metalworking traditions,

but its script is more formally developed and its Italian Vulgate text, laid out in columns, compares with that in the Codex Amiatinus. It also uses touches of gold and has a set of finely individualised evangelist author portraits with inscriptions transliterated from Greek, implying Late Antique influence; the figure of Matthew is demonstrably from the same Antique evangelist portrait type which underlies the scribal portrait in the Codex Amiatinus (Figure 3.1 and Plate 1.1).

Bede gives a glimpse of the extensive range of Mediterranean figurative art brought into Northumbria through Wearmouth-Jarrow. The spoils from the fifth of Benedict Biscop's six journeys to Rome included paintings of the life of Christ which were placed all round [147] the walls of Jarrow's chapel of the Holy Mother of God. There was also a set of scenes 'very skilfully arranged to show how the Old Testament foreshadowed the New'; Moses raising the brazen serpent, for example, was paired with Christ exalted on the Cross (cf. John 3:14). This typological way of reading Scripture, sanctioned in the New Testament, was one of the interpretative techniques of patristic commentators, and was widely adopted in early Christian art. Bede's description is valuable evidence of Jarrow's familiarity



Figure 3.1 The Lindisfarne Gospels, St Matthew. © The British Library Board. Cotton MS Nero D.IV, fol. 25v.

with the concept of art as visual exegesis. He also alludes to the patristic argument that the tradition of the Church is not only passed on in written form: since God in becoming man became visible, the contemplation of visual images can lead the faithful towards an understanding of the divine. In 679 Benedict Biscop brought back scenes from the gospel and the Apocalypse with which he decorated the south and north walls of the church at Wearmouth. Bede observed that they enabled even the illiterate to contemplate the face of Christ and his saints; picturing more clearly the Incarnation and seeing the Last Judgement brought before their very eyes, they were prompted to affective penitential meditation. The images of the Virgin and apostles arranged on a wooden entablature from wall to wall are likely to have been icons – a reminder that Rome, which was within the orbit of the Byzantine world and had a significant Greek population well before the long line of Greek and Syrian popes began in the later seventh century, was an important repository and clearing house of art and influences from the eastern Mediterranean.

Jerusalem

The concept of a spiritual world dominion emanating from its earthly centre in papal Rome was further enlarged by the biblical metaphor of the people of God being drawn from the ends of the world to its centre at Jerusalem, the earthly symbol of the *heavenly* city. Petrine Rome, founded from Jerusalem, came to share symbolically in some of Jerusalem's associations of centrality. Rome not only continued the apostolic task of taking the gospel to all peoples but, like Jerusalem at Pentecost, drew all peoples to itself. The liturgy, buildings and art of papal Rome assimilated features of Jerusalem, [148] particularly through allusions to the Temple and the enshrined site of Christ's burial and Resurrection.

Jerusalem was in turn, often through the influence of such Roman intermediaries, made present at the ends of the earth in Insular art and buildings and descriptions of churches. This process of *imitatio* did not require the literal imitation or detailed description of a particular architectural or pictorial image, but the suggestion of some identifying feature or aspect of the image through which its significance could be both appropriated and transformed for a new context. There are hints and evocations of the Temple (and therefore of the heavenly Jerusalem it foreshadowed), or of Christ's tomb, in widely differing descriptions and survivals of Insular sites. Examples include not only Paulinus's stone church at York (square in shape, like the sanctuary of the Temple and the New Jerusalem) or Wilfrid's layout of the stone crypt at Ripon, but also Cogitosus's account of Brigit's church at Kildare, Adomnán's depiction of Columba's Iona, and Bede's account of Cuthbert's hermitage on Fame.

Wilfrid's biographer describes the Romanising splendours of Hexham as without rival in scale north of the Alps, but also claims that the plans and construction of Hexham and Ripon were divinely inspired, like those of Moses's Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. Bede was careful to avoid any suggestion that the two

Old Testament sanctuaries prefigured actual church buildings. In common with patristic tradition, he interpreted both Tabernacle and Temple as divinely ordained symbols or *figurae* which can apply to Christ himself, to the universal Church and the individual believer and to the heavenly life of the New Jerusalem. He shared his vision of the Church more closely with Acca, who succeeded Wilfrid at Hexham (709–32), and to whom Bede dedicated his spiritual interpretations of the biblical accounts of the building and rebuilding of the Temple.

Christian allusions to the Tabernacle and Temple were often combined with New Testament architectural metaphors of the community of Christ's body (that is, the Church) as a living building, with an inviolable foundation and cornerstone in Christ and a building fabric made up of the living stones and pillars of the faithful (I Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:19–22; I Peter 2:4–10). Such interpretations were well known, and themselves inform a number of Insular works of art. The apostles figured as pillars of the Church (Galatians 2:9) in arcaded Roman portrait-bust reliefs on stone pillars and cross shafts, as at [149] Easby. Visualisations of the Tabernacle–Temple metaphor in manuscripts show considerable exegetical complexity, and range from the massive inscribed plan of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus to the house-shaped shrine format of the living Church depicted in the Book of Kells (fol. 202v), and the inscribed diagram of the heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh, whose inscriptions harmonise the apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem and the biblical descriptions of its prefiguring in the Tabernacle and the Temple.

The cult of the Cross

In his account of the Holy Places, which circulated in Northumbria during the reign of Aldfrith (685–705) and was adapted by Bede, Adomnán depicted a plan of the great pilgrimage complex enclosing Golgotha and Christ's sepulchre. He saw the historic location of Christ's Passion and Resurrection in Jerusalem as the literal fulfilment of the prophecy: 'God our king before the ages has wrought our salvation in the centre of the earth' (Psalm 73:12). The churches founded in Jerusalem by Constantine to commemorate the site of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection at the centre of the earth had a symbolic counterpart in the Constantinian church of the Holy Cross, known as the *basilica Hierusalem*, founded near the Lateran in Rome to house a relic of the True Cross. The veneration of the Cross in Jerusalem and imperial Constantinople was simulated in the papal development of the cult in seventh-century Rome, aspects of which were reflected in the early eighth-century cult of Oswald's cross. A cross-slab in reused Roman stone at Jarrow has an inscription: 'In this unique sign life is given back to the world'. It refers to the saving power of the Cross but the opening words, *In hoc singulari signo*, specifically recall accounts of Constantine's victory under the sign of the Cross in 312, with momentous results for the Church, which Bede also evokes in his description of Oswald setting up a wooden cross before battle against the British King Cadwallon in 635.

It announced a military victory over the enemy, but also signalled a spiritual conquest begun not directly from Rome but by teachers ‘from the land of the Irish’ who ‘proclaimed the word of God with great devotion in all the provinces under Oswald’s rule’, later defined [150] by Bede as ‘all the peoples and kingdoms of Britain, divided among the speakers of four different languages, British, Pictish, Irish and English’. Oswald’s cross, though of wood and ‘hastily made’, and possibly influenced by wooden crosses he could have seen on Iona during exile, is described as a *vexillum* and a *tropaeum*, the Roman terms for a battle standard and victory trophy but here, Bede stresses, denoting a heavenly triumph. The story is not simply of a new Constantine, but of the extension to the ends of the earth of Christ’s spiritual empire, more lasting than the might of imperial Rome, whose monumental remains now littered the landscape. Bede claims that the Cross was the first sign of the Christian faith in Anglian Bernicia and was set up ‘close to the wall with which the Romans once girded the whole of Britain, from sea to sea’.

The Ruthwell Cross

Beyond Hadrian’s Wall a century or so after Oswald’s victory, the Anglo-Saxons were to erect magnificent signs of the Cross in stone at Bewcastle and Ruthwell, each over five metres in height, which demonstrate mastery of the Roman skill of relief sculpture and possibly the influence of Jarrow. Some have viewed the Ruthwell Cross on the Solway Firth as an ensign of Romanising Anglian triumphalism over Celts in a frontier territory of the Bernician kingdom. In the tradition traced here it proclaims a larger victory.

The cross-head surmounting the shaft features two evangelists, identified by their symbols as Matthew and John; presumably Mark and Luke and their symbols occupied the original transom. The Psalmist’s words were often applied to the universal mission of the four gospel writers, two of whom were apostles, two of whom had received their testimony of Christ from Peter and Paul: ‘There is no speech or language where their voices are not heard. Their sound has gone out into all the world, and their words to the ends of the earth’ (Psalm 18:4). The New Testament, followed by biblical commentators including Bede, associated diversity of languages, denoting diversity of peoples, with the unifying effect of the gospel. St Jerome had influentially observed that before the Resurrection of Christ, the peoples of the world from India to Britain, from the frozen North to [151] the burning South, had lived like brutes in discord. But now, ‘the voices and writings of all nations proclaim the passion and the resurrection of Christ’. Alluding to the patristic idea that the name and title of Jesus inscribed on the title-board of the Cross in the sacred languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin (Luke 23:38; John 19:20) was a sign announcing Christ’s universal sovereignty, Jerome explained that Christ is ‘now the one cry of the world’, not only for ‘the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans, peoples which the Lord has dedicated to his faith by the title written on his cross’, but also for barbarians. [152]

At Ruthwell, the Cross proclaims the gospel in sacred and barbarian languages: it 'speaks' through Latin texts written in the Roman alphabet but also in Old English verse, written in the first person and incised in runes. Éamonn Ó Carragáin has argued that the subject matter and Latin captions or *tituli* of the series of deeply cut figural panels on the two broad sides are closely influenced by the Roman liturgy of the catechumenate and concepts of Christ's presence in baptism and the Eucharist, and are theologically complemented by the heroic vernacular account of the death of the incarnate Christ, which is told in the borders of the narrow sides of the monument. In a single unifying image the sculptural decoration of the narrow sides reveals Christ to be the Tree of Life, that is, the axis at the centre of the world joining heaven and earth and providing spiritual food and healing for all. The Tree rises the height of the towering shaft on both sides and is shown in the form of a rooted vine-scroll filled with diverse creatures feeding on its fruit (Figure 3.2). It regenerates a Mediterranean image of the incorporation of all the faithful members of the Church into the sacramental and the glorified body of Christ (John 15:1–5; 6:56). The form and iconography of the Ruthwell Cross, its Christology and use of the written word show the Anglo-Saxons to be a people engrafted into the universal Church and familiar with its Romanised culture but also highly creative in adapting its conventions and integrating elements from their own tradition.

The Bewcastle and Ruthwell monuments feature an otherwise unknown image of Christ offering a blessing with two beasts at his feet, which differs from the imperially derived image of Christ trampling defeated beasts in fulfilment of Psalm 90:13 (Figure 3.3). The version at Ruthwell has an inscription which is so arranged that the sacred name and title, *Jesus Christ*, appear immediately over Christ's head like a caption, customarily abbreviated as *Ihs Xps* ('Saviour' and 'Messiah'). The words incised down the sides further show him to be both Judge and Saviour of the world, and recognised as such by beasts and dragons in the desert (*Ihs Xps iudex aequitatis bestiae et dracones cognoverunt in deserto salvatorem mundi*). Verbal similarities have been sought in biblical images of the desert, such as Isaiah 43:20, and Jerome's *Life of St Paul the Hermit*, where St Antony marvels to find that although far from any great city, the desert beasts 'speak of Christ'; one of them, half-man, half-beast, voices their knowledge that Christ came for the salvation of the world and that 'his sound went forth into all the [153] earth' (Psalm 18:5). An Insular version of such an epiphany, transposed to the shore of the North Sea, has suggested a visual parallel to the Ruthwell image: in the *Life of Cuthbert* a monk observes two otters who humbly prostrate themselves at Cuthbert's feet and receive his blessing, evidently recognising Christ in the holy man.

The Ruthwell Cross attests Christ's spiritual dominion at the world's edge and particularly his presence in the monastic desert. The scene of Christ and the beasts is positioned directly above an inscribed panel of the monastic desert saints, Paul and Antony, who are elsewhere portrayed not in Anglo-Saxon sculpture but on the great Pictish cross-slab at Nigg, c. 800, and on later Irish high crosses. The life-long Lenten fast of monastic life 'in the desert', in imitation of Christ, is a recurring theme in hagiography. The monk disciplines the carnal within himself, and



Figure 3.2 The Ruthwell Cross. Inhabited vine-scroll: the Tree of Life. Photo: Jane Hawkes.



Figure 3.3 The Ruthwell Cross. Christ recognised by the beasts in the desert. Photo: Jane Hawkes.

the wilderness is transformed into a renewed and peaceable creation which anticipates the heavenly paradise. The two inscribed panels at Ruthwell have some affinity with Bede's accounts of Anglo-Saxon saints in the Columban tradition. In what is described as a custom of Lindisfarne, Cedd and his brother had undertaken Lenten penitential fasting, vigil and prayer at a remote Deiran site 'which seemed better fitted for the haunts of robbers and the dens of wild beasts than human habitation'. They conquered this wilderness, and transformed it from the stains of former crimes into a place suitable for laying the foundations of the monastery of Lastingham. Bede's comment directly applies the desert image: 'as Isaiah says, "In the habitations where once dragons lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes" [Isaiah 35:7; cf. 43:20], that is, the fruit of good works shall spring up where once beasts dwelt or where men lived after the manner of beasts'.

The Codex Amiatinus

Central to the complex artistic and other cultural changes accompanying the process of conversion and the reception of the Latin Bible and its exegesis was the Insular production of manuscripts. In c. 678 Ceolfrith journeyed to Rome with Benedict Biscop. They returned, accompanied by John, the archcantor of St Peter's, Rome,

with many treasures, including a pandect or single-volume [154] copy of the whole Bible, which was a rarity in the early medieval world. The monastery of St Peter and St Paul at Wearmouth-Jarrow was to produce three great pandects during Ceolfrith's abbacy (688–716). Two were placed in the monastic churches and Ceolfrith took the third and largest, the Codex Amiatinus, on his final pilgrimage to Rome in 716, not simply as a diplomatic gift for Pope Gregory II but 'as a gift to St Peter, the prince of the apostles'. On the dedication page Ceolfrith offered it in gift exchange, 'desiring that I and mine may ever have a place amidst the joys of so great a father, a memorial in heaven'. He described himself as 'abbot from the furthest ends of the English', sending pledges of his devotion 'to the body of the sublime Peter, justly venerated, whom ancient faith declares to be head of the Church'. The ancient *topos* of Rome conquering, civilising and Christianising the barbarian periphery was here elegantly used as a foil to the magnificent *Romanitas* of the Anglo-Saxon book, now taken to the centre from which the faith had been received.

It is the earliest extant Latin Bible, written on a magisterial scale (over 1,000 folios or 2,000 pages, 505 × 340 mm) in formal Roman uncial script. Its prefatory illustrations and diagrams reflect the art of Late Antiquity, for example in the use of gold and the illusion of spatial depth in the depictions of the scribe and the Tabernacle. Although influenced by one or more books deriving from the sixth-century monastic library of Cassiodorus in Vivarium, southern Italy, the Codex Amiatinus is not simply a copy of any of the books which are now known from Cassiodorus's description of his library. The Amiatinus has a one-volume format, like Cassiodorus's 'big book' which contained the Old Latin biblical text, as partially revised by Jerome. This book reached Northumbria – Bede records seeing its illustrations of the Tabernacle and Temple – and may well have been the pandect 'of the old translation' brought back by Ceolfrith. The text used in the Codex Amiatinus, however, is Jerome's 'new translation' (the 'Vulgate'). It is written in columns rather than as a solid block and is laid out, according to Jerome's recommendations, in sense units, as Cassiodorus had done in another of his Bibles, which was divided or bound in nine volumes (*novem codices*). A nine-volume Bible is depicted in the scribe's book cupboard in the frontispiece of the Amiatinus (Plate 1.1), and it is likely that all or part of Cassiodorus's *novem codices* also reached Northumbria.

The *History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* does not say [155] that the new translation used in Ceolfrith's three pandects replaced the old translation of the pandect he had earlier brought back from Rome. Rather, it suggests that Ceolfrith ensured his monastery had complete copies of the Old Testament and the New in both the old translation and the new, which had radical implications for the study of Scripture.

Cassiodorus had voiced a major patristic theme when he argued that the divine authorship and authority of both Testaments, and consequently the unity and harmony of their constituent books, is reflected in the harmony underlying the diversity of inspired biblical translations and variety of exegesis made by orthodox commentators through the ages. He likened the different divisions and groupings of the biblical books made by Augustine, Jerome and the Septuagint to the work

of the four evangelists who, 'though their manner of speaking is divergent', are united in the one faith. The three classifications are set out in the Codex Amiatinus as opulent diagrams. In each the titles of the canonical books of the Old Testament as well as the New are listed within cruciform or lozenge-shaped frames which are suspended from roundel depictions of the Trinity and accompanied by classically framed captions. These striking whole-page images present an orderly digest of information and a symbolic interpretation of its theological significance.

A sumptuous purple, arcaded page lists the titles of all the biblical books as they appear in the Amiatinus. A further large diagram depicts the harmony of the Old and New Testaments by symbolically showing that the Mosaic Law, spiritually interpreted, is contained within the gospels. The diagram displays the titles of the books of the Pentateuch (the Law or five books of Moses) in five linked golden circles which are prominently arranged in the shape of the Cross and set within one large purple circle. Each title is accompanied by its interpretation drawn from Jerome's description of the five books of the Law in his famous letter 53, which briefly reviews every book of the Bible in order to show that Christ the divine Wisdom is concealed throughout, beneath the literal letter of Scripture, and that the Mosaic Law is 'the prefiguring of the law of the Gospel'.

These multiple listings and images of the complete *bibliotheca* of Scripture in the opening pages of the Codex Amiatinus provide a thematic context in which to read the frontispiece portrait of a scribe seated before an *armarium* or book cupboard filled with nine [157] volumes, whose inscribed titles constitute yet another grouping of all the books of Scripture. The frontispiece offers in pictorial form the kind of exegesis Jerome was drawing on when, in letter 53, he used the term 'an *armarium* of the Scriptures' to describe a Christian commentator. It was a metaphor of classical and biblical origins which could refer both to the divine library of orthodox belief constituted by all the books of Scripture, and to the inner library of the individual believer who, guided by the Fathers, knows not only the literal text of the sacred books but also how to interpret their spiritual meaning.

Above the scribal portrait is an epigraph: 'The sacred books having been burned by enemy fire, Ezra, zealous for God, restored this work'. Isidore of Seville summarised the tradition that the Old Testament priest and scribe Ezra edited the Hebrew Scriptures salvaged after the Babylonian Captivity; their translation into Greek in the Septuagint and into Latin by Jerome marked stages in the providential bringing of the divine word to the Hebrews, the Greeks and the Romans. Bede richly elaborated this tradition to show that Ezra, whom the British writer Gildas had described as 'the library of the Law', was the inspired restorer and editor of the literal text, but also renewed its meaning. Bede's commentary on Ezra presents him as a prophetic figure of all orthodox teachers who share in Christ's work of showing how the New Testament is contained within the Old, the gospel within the Law.

The epigraph in the Codex Amiatinus highlights the fact that the Hebrew text restored by Ezra (and made accessible through Jerome's translation) is contained in this very book. The haloed scribe sits before the *armarium* of the Scriptures in the pose of an Antique evangelist portrait. Whether or not it was intended to

commemorate Jerome or any other particular teacher occupied in the continuing evangelical task, the iconography conveys the patristic idea that the Holy Spirit who inspired the original biblical authors and their editor continues to work through those who faithfully interpret the divine word. The scribal frontispiece and the illustrations which follow it make clear that Wearmouth-Jarrow not only possessed exemplary editorial and scribal skills in producing the text of this monumental Latin Bible, but was in union with the community of the faithful throughout the ages in interpreting the Scriptures handed down from the apostles. It was this assurance, and not just the outward [158] appearance of *Romanitas*, that Ceolfrith brought from the furthest ends of the English in 716 to offer at the tomb of St Peter, 'whom ancient faith declares to be head of the Church'.

It was over a hundred years since Columbanus had told Gregory the Great of his veneration of the authority of Jerome and had assured Boniface IV of the orthodoxy of his people and their devotion to Scripture:

For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Spirit, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching [. . .] but the Catholic faith, as it was delivered by you first, who are the successors of the holy apostles, is maintained unbroken.

The Insular gospel books

Of all the books in the library of Scripture, the gospels epitomised the faith of the Church, handed down through the testimony of the apostles and taken to all peoples. An enthroned gospel book had symbolically presided over the ecumenical councils of the early Church in which orthodox belief, centring on the Trinity and the identity of Christ, had been defined and defended. Archbishop Theodore emulated the custom when he convened an assembly of the 'bishops of the island of Britain' at Hatfield in 679 to recognise the decrees of all five universal councils from Nicaea in 325 to Constantinople in 553, as well as the Lateran council of 649, and to subscribe to a Trinitarian confession of the faith:

Having the most holy Gospels before us [. . .] we united in declaring the true and orthodox faith as our Lord Jesus Christ delivered it in the flesh to the disciples [. . .] and as it was handed down in the creed of the holy fathers and by all the holy and universal councils in general and the whole body of the accredited fathers of the catholic Church [. . .] We glorify our Lord Jesus Christ as they glorified him, adding and subtracting nothing.

The credal confession was witnessed by John, archcantor of St Peter's, who was to take a copy of the proceedings back to Rome in preparation for the forthcoming sixth ecumenical council.

In Rome the four gospels were displayed over the altar in the [159] oratory where Wilfrid had prayed for aid to teach the gospel among the nations (cf. Matthew 28:19). Under the instruction of the archdeacon of Rome on that first visit, Wilfrid studied each of the four gospels, together with the Easter rule. Later, 'for the good of his soul', he ordered 'the four Gospels to be written out in letters of purest gold on purpled parchment and illuminated' with a gold case set with precious gems, which he presented to his foundation of St Peter's at Ripon. It was 'a marvel of beauty unheard of in our times'. The description recalls Late Antique uncial books, clearly distinguishing Wilfrid's book from another category of illuminated manuscripts known as Insular gospel books, produced in Ireland and Britain during the seventh and eighth centuries. These books are generally regarded as the most characteristic expression of Insular art, yet most of them appear to belong to a different world from the one in which antiquity and *Romanitas* were evoked.

It is difficult to ascribe precise dates and places of origin to Insular gospel books or even to place some of them in sequence. Dating has sometimes reflected assessments of whether a manuscript looks more or less 'progressive' than the Lindisfarne Gospels, which shows unusually clear Mediterranean influences and has seemed to offer a fixed point because of its presumed connection with the translation of the relics of St Cuthbert in 698. A great deal of evidence has been lost, scribes and manuscripts did not necessarily remain in the place of production and different elements in a manuscript could be derived from sources of various date and background.

The Book of Durrow

There are sub-groups and individual variants among surviving manuscripts and their texts, but the features which readily distinguish Insular gospel books from others are already present in the Book of Durrow. It is the earliest complete example, though its dating to the third quarter of the seventh century is currently questioned. Northumbria and, increasingly, Iona or Ireland have all been proposed as the place of origin. Unlike the Codex Amiatinus, it could never be mistaken for a Mediterranean book. Its script is the distinctive Insular half-uncial which was first developed from antique [160] forms in Ireland and in the Celtic part of Britain; its page layout differs from the regularity and restraint of antique uncial manuscripts. Some of its decorative intrusions on the text, such as the enlargement and highlighting of certain initial letters and the *diminuendo* or tapering size of the following letters, are features already accomplished in the Irish psalter known as the Cathach, dating from the early seventh or even late sixth century. At the opening (*incipit*) of each of the four gospels in Insular gospel books, the first letters are magnified and decorated, with the rest of the initial word and several of the following words written in display letters, usually arranged in successive lines in a descending hierarchy of size and type, and radically reducing the remaining area of text on the page (Figure 3.4). Patrick McGurk described the practice of also magnifying and decorating the *chi-rho* (Xp) abbreviation of the name of Christ at the beginning of Matthew 1:18, already present in Durrow, as an Insular symptom



Figure 3.4 The Book of Durrow, *Incipit* of Mark's Gospel. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A. 4.5 (57), fol. 86.

with no surviving antique precedent. The form of the display letters is distorted by their embellishment with motifs found in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon metalwork, which migrated to vellum more readily than to stone.

The full-page decoration in the Book of Durrow, confined to the beginning and end of the book and the two pages before the *incipit* of each of the four gospels, does not hint at the naturalistic and narrative riches of the Greco-Roman pictorial tradition and carries a very restricted range of subject matter, notably framed canon tables which list the gospel concordances, carpet pages of abstract ornament in which the Cross may be the focus of the design or concealed within it and stylised renderings of the symbols of the four evangelists. Durrow's depiction of the symbols as full-length creatures, unaccompanied by the evangelists, is a striking feature of Insular books and those produced in areas of Insular influence: it occurs in the Echternach, Trier and Cambridge-London gospel books and in the Book of Kells; in the Lindisfarne, St Gall and Lichfield Gospels this symbol type is combined with pictures of the evangelists. The portrayal of the unaccompanied full-length symbols as terrestrial creatures (that is, unhaloed and wingless) in the Book of Durrow and the Echternach, Trier and Cambridge-London Gospels is very rare elsewhere.

The decorated pages of Durrow simulate techniques and motifs used in precious metalwork, including cloisonné, enamel, millefiori, glass studs, spiral bosses and pierced panels, and may similarly carry [161] connotations of prestigious commissions and gift objects. Close parallels have been drawn with treasures deposited in the Sutton Hoo ship-burial in the early seventh century, particularly the Germanic shoulder clasps, purse lid and great gold buckle and, more generally, with the escutcheons of the Celtic hanging bowls. Recent discussions have again made comparisons with Irish material, including the Moylough belt shrine, and noted the common availability of motifs on both sides of the Irish Sea. But the chequered cross pattern of the Sutton Hoo clasps has clear affiliations with the Roman Christian world, and the Frankish and east Mediterranean items in the hoard also help suggest a more complex background for the Book of Durrow's decoration than the direct transposition of native metalworking motifs into the new medium and context of a book. Insular metalworkers themselves assimilated Roman motifs, and not only for ecclesiastical commissions such as altar plate, reliquaries and book covers.

Ornamental motifs ultimately derived from these augmented Germanic and Celtic La Tène traditions already occur together in the Book of Durrow, though within separate compartments. This suggests there was considerable earlier interchange between the various Insular metalworking cultures underlying the decorative repertoire of the gospel books, as well as interchange between media. The stylised delineation of limb joints on some of the evangelist symbols in Durrow and other books has been compared with designs on Pictish carved stones. The discovery of Anglo-Saxon moulds and fragments of artefacts in the seventh-century metalworking deposits at Dunadd emphasises the likely role of Dál Riata in the amalgamation of Celtic and Germanic styles. The importance of Ireland in the formation of the English Church in the seventh century, and especially of Columban

influences among the Picts and in Northumbria and its southern outreaches, suggests Columban monasticism and its royal patrons as an important agency in the long cultural interchange between the Insular regions which had been intensified by the processes of conversion and reached an extraordinary creative synthesis in the Insular gospel books. Durrow itself is generally regarded as a Columban book. It has been suggested that an early non-Roman liturgical lection system may underlie the selection of some at least of the gospel passages which received decorative highlighting in Insular gospel books. [163]

The quality of Durrow's design, and the fact that the major features of Insular gospel books are already in place, argue that it comes from an existing Insular tradition of gospel book production. Several features, including the frontispiece cross-carpet page and some of the other interlaced ornament in Durrow, suggest the influence of eastern Mediterranean books and their covers. The pattern on the cloak of St Matthew's symbol of a man has been compared with the Sutton Hoo clasps, but there is a closer parallel in an Armenian gospel book (Figure 3.5, Figure 3.6). Like Durrow, it has a restricted palette and shows the human figure frontally but with feet in profile. It depicts two standing, bearded evangelists shown frontally and with their feet in profile; they wear cloaks of bell-shaped outline which are filled with geometric patterns, one of chequered rectangles. The book is tenth-century but probably preserves earlier eastern Mediterranean traditions which could have been available to Insular artists. Some Insular books have additional full-page pictures, most notably the Book of Kells, which assimilates but visually transforms a wide range of Mediterranean iconography and motifs such as the equilateral stepped cross, lions, peacocks, angels and vine-scrolls. In short, although the Insular gospel books differ from manuscripts produced in Wearmouth-Jarrow and Canterbury which self-consciously display *Romanitas*, they do reveal the influence of the Roman world, particularly of motifs and iconic images from eastern parts of it where local artistic traditions of abstraction and stylisation had long interacted with the figurative traditions of Greco-Roman art.

The spiritual interpretation of Scripture

One of the most telling signs of Mediterranean influence in the art of the Insular gospel books is the use of visual techniques analogous to the rhetorical devices employed by patristic and Insular commentators to illuminate the continuing spiritual significance hidden within the literal text of Scripture. St Augustine, in his influential work *On Christian Doctrine*, warned that understanding the meaning of the sacred text cannot be achieved by learning and reason alone. Many passages do not have obvious application to Christ and the Church, to the inner life of the individual reader or to the heavenly life: to find [164] such spiritual meaning in the divine word is an act of discernment requiring grace and, for most people, authoritative guidance in reading the signs. Patristic commentaries presuppose that the apparent contradictions and obscurities in Scripture were intended by the divine author to stimulate certain kinds of reader to seek beyond a fundamental or



Figure 3.5 The Book of Durrow. Symbol of Matthew. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A. 4.5 (57), fol. 21v.



Figure 3.6 Armenian gospel book. Evangelist portraits. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. MS W. 537, fol. 114v.

‘carnal’ level of understanding. Meditating on the mystery could lead to the apprehension at a more profound level of truths more openly expressed in other parts of Scripture. Properly interpreted, the very difficulties in the literal text could act as *sacramenta* or signs to its concealed spiritual meaning. Exegesis of such signs was also often expressed in the riddling language of paradox, metaphor and wordplay, and made use of numerology, etymology and the verbal or visual associations of a text with other Scriptural passages.

This rhetorical repertoire of the Fathers was assimilated by Irish writers in the century before the age of Bede. The work of Adomnán suggests that biblical learning on Iona was particularly rich. Hiberno-Latin gospel commentaries show a readiness of response to certain aspects of the tradition which is of considerable interest in trying to understand features of Insular gospel books such as the elaborate highlighting of the text at the four gospel openings and Matthew 1:18, and the decorative presentation of the listing of names in Christ’s genealogy and of numbers in the canon tables. The Insular gospel books do not illustrate the text literally and do not provide visual aids for teaching doctrine. Their approach reaches a climax in the Book of Kells where certain passages of the text have the decorative density of carpet pages; the words, hidden and rendered almost illegible by the distortion and ornamentation of the letter forms, ambiguous spatial relationships and multiple outlining, become abstract images. Such veiling and metamorphosis of the text provides some broad visual parallel to the concept that the literal text of Scripture conceals a hidden meaning. But there are also more particular parallels, as the example of the evangelist symbols may show. The ancient traditions of decoration and stylisation on which Insular artists drew, when combined with the rhetorical traditions of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, were extraordinarily well-suited to the creation of powerful iconic and arcane images in a sacred liturgical gospel book which itself constituted a major image of the Word. [167]

The authority of Scripture and the symbols of the evangelists

The Church’s defence of the divine inspiration of Scripture had early focused on the existence of four gospels which, of all the gospels written, were alone regarded as authoritative. Even the most scholarly attempt to reconcile the manifest differences between the four, Augustine’s *On the Harmony of the Gospels*, also made use of *symbolic* demonstrations of their underlying harmony. The four winged creatures who attend the divine throne in Ezekiel’s cosmic vision of God’s majesty (Ezekiel 1:4–26) are evoked in St John’s apocalyptic vision of the four winged beings who worship the Lord enthroned in glory, the Creator of all things (Revelation 4:6–8). They were interpreted by the Fathers as signs or *figurae* of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, whose four testimonies form the different facets of a single gospel. Early exegetes combined this image of the fourfold gospel with pre-Christian cosmological concepts of a fourfold ordering of all time, space and matter, which is evident in the four divisions of the day and seasons of the year, the four winds or cardinal directions, the four elements and their properties. The

underlying quadriform unity and measure of such cosmic order was seen to reflect the divine wisdom of its Creator. To those who looked with the inner eye, these cosmological and biblical quaternities overwhelmingly demonstrated that divine authority underlay the fourfold form of the gospel in which Christ was revealed. What at first sight constituted a difficulty, namely the existence of four apparently conflicting gospels, was therefore read as a sign pointing to a spiritual truth: the four gospels together comprise the fullness of faith handed down by the apostles to peoples throughout the four corners of the world.

The tradition of defending orthodox belief contained in the gospel against those who try either to increase or diminish its fourfold nature was profoundly shaped by a series of patristic texts which were used as prefaces in Insular gospel books and expounded in HibernoLatin gospel commentaries. The first such 'text', the Eusebian canon tables, is composed of lists of numbers, corresponding with numbered sections of each gospel. The lists are arranged in ten tables to [168] show the sections of text common to all four gospels, the sections common to three or two gospels, and, finally, the sections unique to each gospel. Carl Nordenfalk noted that Eusebius did not compare all possible combinations of the gospels, but restricted the tables to ten because the ancient world regarded ten, the aggregate of the first four numbers, as a perfect number, containing within itself 'all other numbers, proportions and harmonies'. Like other Christian exegetes, he used this numerological image of cosmic harmony to demonstrate the fulness and harmony of Scripture: when spiritually interpreted, the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments of the Law, epitomising the Old Testament) can be seen to contain the fourfold gospel.

Columbanus alludes to this tradition when he describes the spiritual life as the fulfilling of 'the words of the Ten Commandments in the Gospel's completeness, which resides in the number four'. The Irish scholar Ailerán (d. 665) wrote a numerological poem on the gospel canons which visualises the evangelists' four symbolic beasts – the man, the lion, the calf and the eagle in harmonious discourse. In each of nine cryptic stanzas the creatures in various combinations – first all four, then in threes, then in pairs – tell through riddling clues the number of times they utter the Lord's praises together 'with one voice' in any particular canon table and, in the tenth stanza, how many times each 'speaks' of him alone. The image finds a visual counterpart in the diverse animated groupings of the evangelist symbols depicted above the canon tables in the Book of Kells.

The Eusebian canon tables act as a visual exegesis in Insular gospel books, most elaborately of all in Kells, where the cross, the *chi*, the lozenge and eucharistic motifs set amidst the rich profusion of Insular ornament serve as further signs of the identity of Christ about to be revealed in the gospels. The canon tables symbolically proclaim the harmony of the gospels and the divine authority of the whole of Scripture even when, as in the Book of Durrow and the Lindisfarne Gospels, cross-references written in the margins of the gospel text render the canon tables superfluous or, as in the Book of Kells, the absence of any marginal numbering of the sections of gospel text makes the tables unusable. In both Lindisfarne and Kells the Eusebian canon tables form monumental decorative sequences framed

beneath architectural arcades, a pictorial convention for marking the entrance to the sacred text which derived from Mediterranean practice (Figure 3.7, Figure 3.8). Most Insular *de luxe* gospel books, including the Book of Durrow and [169] probably the now incomplete Book of Kells, also included a copy of Jerome's letter, *Novum Opus*, as a preface. This means that, like the Codex Amiatinus, they contained Jerome's dedication of his revised gospel text to his papal patron, and his explanation of how the accompanying Eusebian canon tables avoid the serious error of other concordances which fail to take account of the complete gospel text or to show the diversity as well as the unity of the four gospels.

In the Lindisfarne Gospels the *Novum Opus* facing the frontispiece cross-carpet page is decorated on the scale of a gospel *incipit*; it is headed 'Prologue to the ten canons', which themselves span some sixteen pages. The opening of Jerome's introduction to his commentary on Matthew's Gospel was also used as a preface (*Plures fuisse*) in Vulgate gospel books, including the Lindisfarne Gospels, and was widely quoted by Hiberno-Latin commentators. Jerome affirmed the four canonical gospels as the measure of orthodoxy, and emphasised both the individual character of each of the gospels and their authors and their essential harmony. He harmonised the visions from the Old Testament and the New, the creatures of Ezekiel's vision (each of which had the face of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle) with the four creatures in the apocalyptic vision (the first like a lion, the second like a calf, the third with the face of a man and the fourth like a flying eagle). He did not focus on the differences between the two texts' literal descriptions of the beasts, but on what both texts signify. In his commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, Jerome again linked the four creatures to the evangelists and their gospel openings, but also related the image of the four gospels going out over all the earth to various cosmological quaternities – the four elements, seasons and directions – whose diverse constituents similarly form a unity.

Columbanus told Gregory the Great that he had read the first six books of Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel, and asked the pope to send him a copy of his own recent tracts on the subject. Gregory's homilies, delivered in Rome in 593, reinforce Jerome's pairings of the beasts in Ezekiel's vision with the evangelists, and the idea that each gospel, as characterised in its opening lines and by the nature of its appropriate symbolic beast, reveals a particular aspect of Christ's identity: the man signifies Christ's humanity, the lion his kingship, the calf or ox his priesthood and the eagle his divinity. Gregory's mysterious description of Christ who became a man at his birth, a sacrificial ox in dying, a lion in rising again and an eagle in ascending [170] to heaven was quoted by Hiberno-Latin commentators, and may have influenced the development of the iconography of the beasts: the magnificent lion in the Echternach Gospels and the ascending eagle in the London-Cambridge Gospels, for example, probably functioned not simply as evangelist symbols but as Christ-bearing images. [171]

The pairing of the evangelists with their symbols (generally in the order Matthew–man, Mark–lion, Luke–calf or ox, John–eagle) constituted a spiritual interpretation of the gospel openings. For example, St Matthew has the symbol



Figure 3.7 The Lindisfarne Gospels, Canon Table I: material common to all four gospels.
© The British Library Board. Cotton MS Nero D.IV, fol. 11.

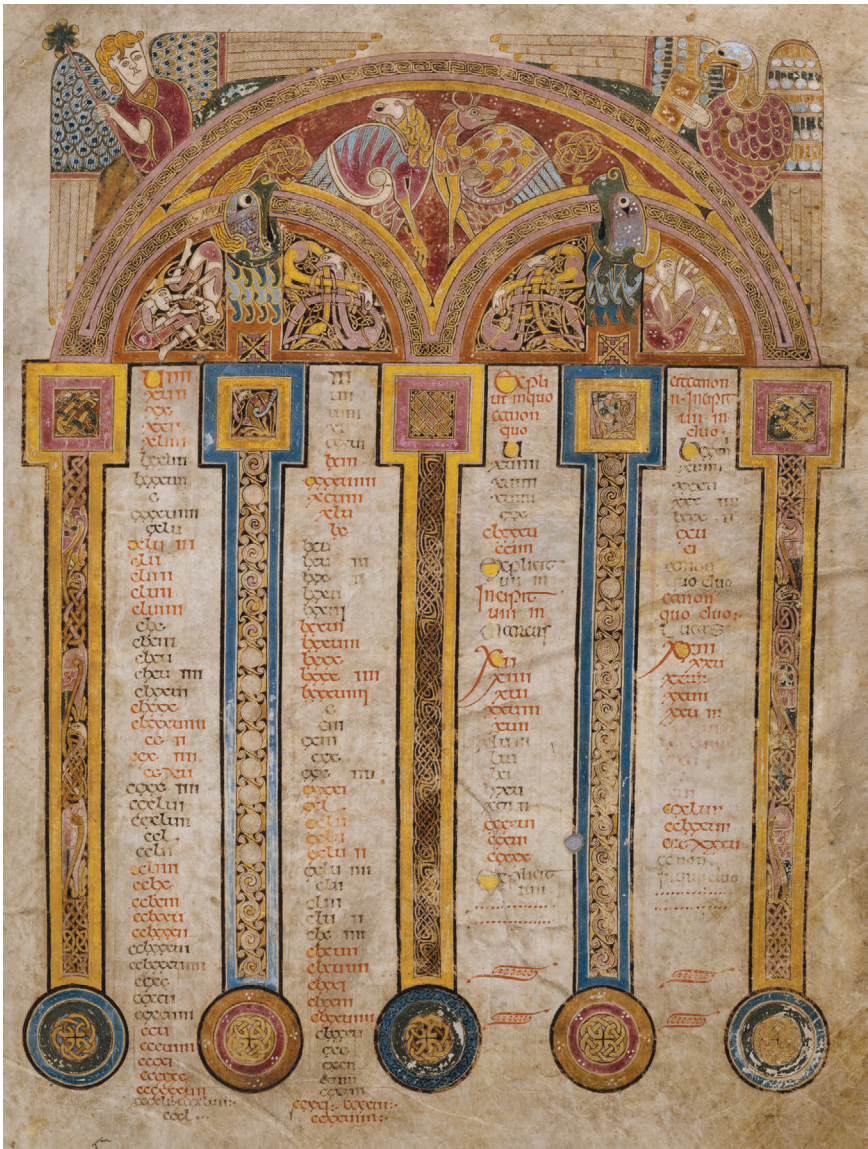


Figure 3.8 The Book of Kells. Canon Tables VI–VIII. Symbols paired Matthew–Mark, Matthew–John, Mark–Luke, Luke–John. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A.1.6 (58), fol. 5.

of a man, because his gospel opens with the account of Christ's genealogy and Incarnation. St [172] John alone of the evangelists was seen to fly straight to Christ's divinity in the opening words of his gospel, just as the eagle alone of all creatures can fly and gaze unblinkingly on the sun. The ninth-century Irish writer Eriugena was drawing on this ancient exegesis when he described John as a spiritual eagle who, on swiftest wings of high contemplation, transcends all vision and flies beyond what can be thought or spoken; he pictured John entering into the mystery of the Trinity and directly receiving the revelation: 'In the beginning was the Word [. . .] and the Word was made flesh' (John 1:1–14).

Four-symbol pages: the Book of Kells

The individual beasts often appear singly before their appropriate gospels in Insular gospel books, and all four symbols are sometimes shown grouped around the Cross either as a frontispiece, as in the Book of Durrow, or before each gospel, as was probably the case in the Lichfield Gospels and the Book of Kells. In Kells each of the three surviving four-symbol pages shows the four creatures in the angles or at the cardinal points of a cruciform design; but each page is decoratively distinct, enclosing the symbols within four rectangular, circular or triangular fields. Each page differently adapts the early Christian convention of using a golden cosmological cross to represent the glorified Christ. The scheme may suggest both the harmony of the fourfold gospel in revealing Christ and the individual character of each gospel's testimony, which was also displayed in the physical differences of their respective symbolic beasts and epitomised in the magnified and ornamented opening words of each evangelist which these whole-page images preface. Patristic and Insular exegetes showed that in witnessing to Christ's humanity and divinity, his priesthood and kingship, the four gospels together constitute a portrait of his identity, and in evoking his incarnation, passion, resurrection and ascension they represent the whole gospel story of salvation.

In the example in the Trier Gospels from the eighth-century Echternach scriptorium, the four beasts of the rare Insular terrestrial type are inscribed with their names from the apocalyptic vision and stand in the four quarters of the design around an interlaced cross whose [173] arms extend to meet the frame (Plate 3.1). The Anglo-Saxon artist clarified the meaning by inserting a portrait-bust of Christ at the centre of the cross and personifications of the winds or directions beyond the four corners, figural features derived from the Mediterranean art of Late Antiquity. Furthermore, this pictorial frontispiece, which unambiguously presents Christ in a cosmic setting and at the centre of the fourfold gospel, directly faces a textual preface, *Phures fuisse*, Jerome's expository text on the evangelists and their symbols. The Cross-symbol pages in Kells have none of these additional clues to their interpretation, but are arguably derived from the same exegetical tradition.

Jerome interpreted the triple *Sanctus* eternally chanted by the four heavenly beasts in the apocalyptic vision, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come' (Revelation 4:8), as an image of the four gospels



Plate 3.1 The Trier Gospels. Four-symbol page facing the preface *Plures fuisse*. Hohe Domkirche Trier, Cod. 61, fol. 1v. Photo: Rita Heyen.

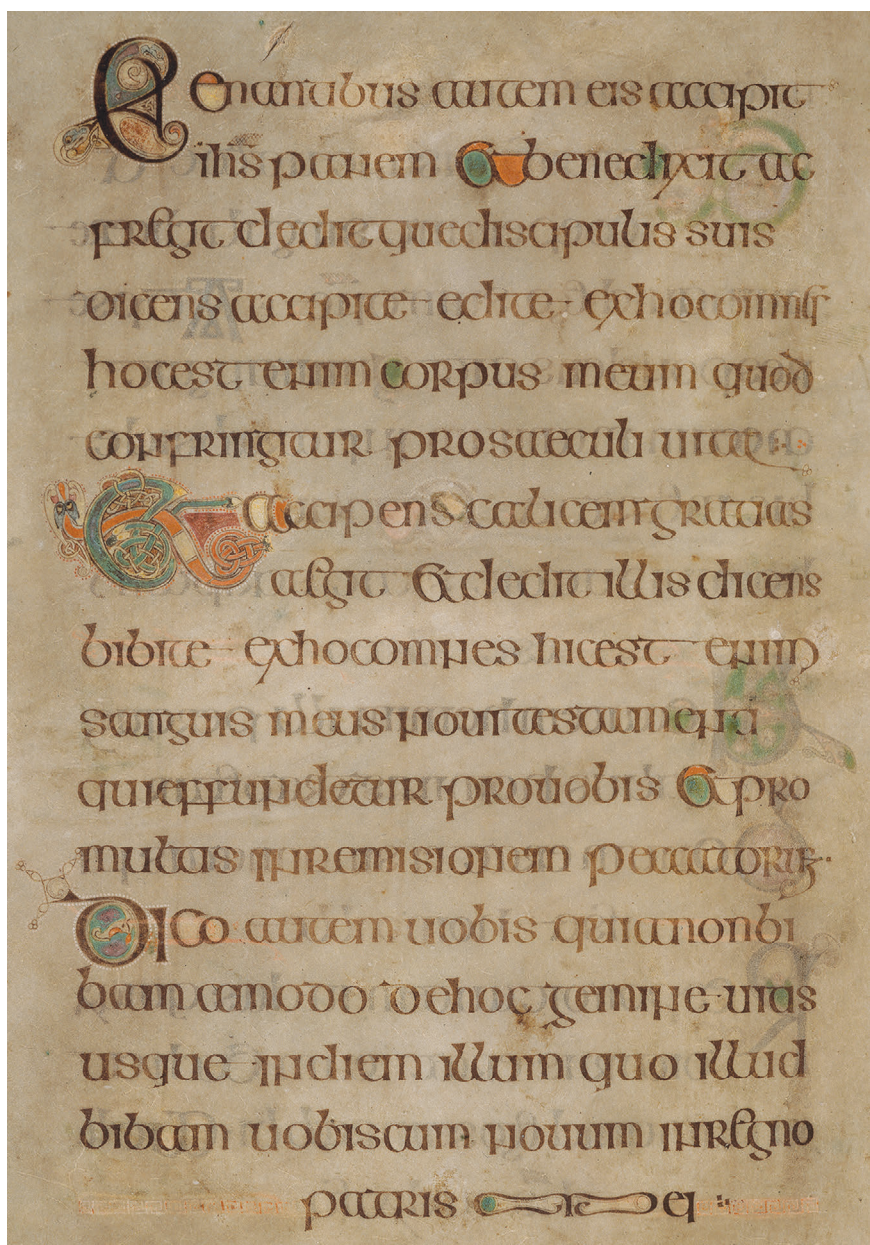


Plate 3.2 The Book of Kells, Matthew 26:26–29. The Board of Trinity College Dublin.
MS 58, fol. 113v.

acclaiming the whole Trinity; it is crucial to his demonstration of the orthodoxy of the fourfold gospel. The closing vision of the seventh-century Irish hymn *Altus Prosator* draws on such patristic interpretation in describing the praise of the Trinity in the 'eternal threefold exchanges' offered by the four creatures and the heavenly host. In the probably late eighth-century compilation known as the Irish Reference Bible, the fourfold ordering of the world's three continents is interpreted as a figure of the fourfold gospel and the Trinity to which it testifies. The commentary notes that the gospels have a single source but each was composed in one of the four parts of the world; in turn, the gospel, whose characteristics are figured in Scriptural and cosmic quaternities, is taken to the four corners of the world. The commentary shows familiarity with features which were given visual expression in early schematic maps, now known only through Carolingian and later copies, in which the quadrangular world is set cornerwise like a lozenge within a square, with the various cosmic quaternities of time, space and matter inscribed at the four corners and four cardinal points of the design.

The four-symbol page prefacing St John's Gospel in the Book of Kells suggests the Christian appropriation of such a world view (Plate 3.3). The rectangular design is divided into four not by an upright cross but by crossed diagonals with a prominent rhombus at the centre; the four corners and four cardinal points of the frame are also decoratively emphasised. In the context of a gospel book, the [174] quadriform design may be read as depicting a stepped cross which diagonally spans the universe depicted by the frame, with the lozenge at the centre of this *chi*-shaped cross forming a cosmological symbol. There is no portrait-bust or other representation of Christ in human form: there is no attempt to instruct viewers in what they do not already know. For those familiar with the signs and with what the four winged creatures at the cardinal points represent, however, Christ is here symbolically revealed in his fourfold gospel, as in his [175] fourfold creation, and those very concepts are renewed. The image immediately precedes a glorious double opening which shows St John in contemplation with pen poised seated in a quadriform design, facing the opening words of his gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word [. . .]'. Strongly quadripartite cross-carpet pages preface St John's Gospel in the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Augsburg Gospels, and it has been noted that a particular mathematical harmony underlies the measurement and ratios of their design. Like the Kells cross-symbol page, they [176] offer some broad visual parallel to the frequent exegetical linking of St John's opening identification of Christ as the Word, the Creator-Logos 'without whom nothing was made' (John 1:1–3), and the Old Testament description of the divine Creator who made all things 'in measure, and in number, and in weight' (Wisdom 11:21).

The individual evangelist and symbol: St Luke and the Lichfield Gospels

The gospel section of the Book of Armagh, c. 807, develops the experimentation in visual exegesis characteristic of the Insular gospel books' depiction of the



Plate 3.3 The Book of Kells. Four-symbols page prefacing John's Gospel. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A.I.6 (58), fol. 290v.

symbols. On the four-symbol page Luke's calf is inscribed *vitulus* (cf. Revelation 4:7) but is drawn, like the remaining symbolic beasts on the page, with the four wings peculiar to the creatures as described in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:6). Their wings just touch (Ezekiel 1:11), or extend into each other's compartment within the quadripartite design (Figure 3.9). On the page prefacing Luke's Gospel

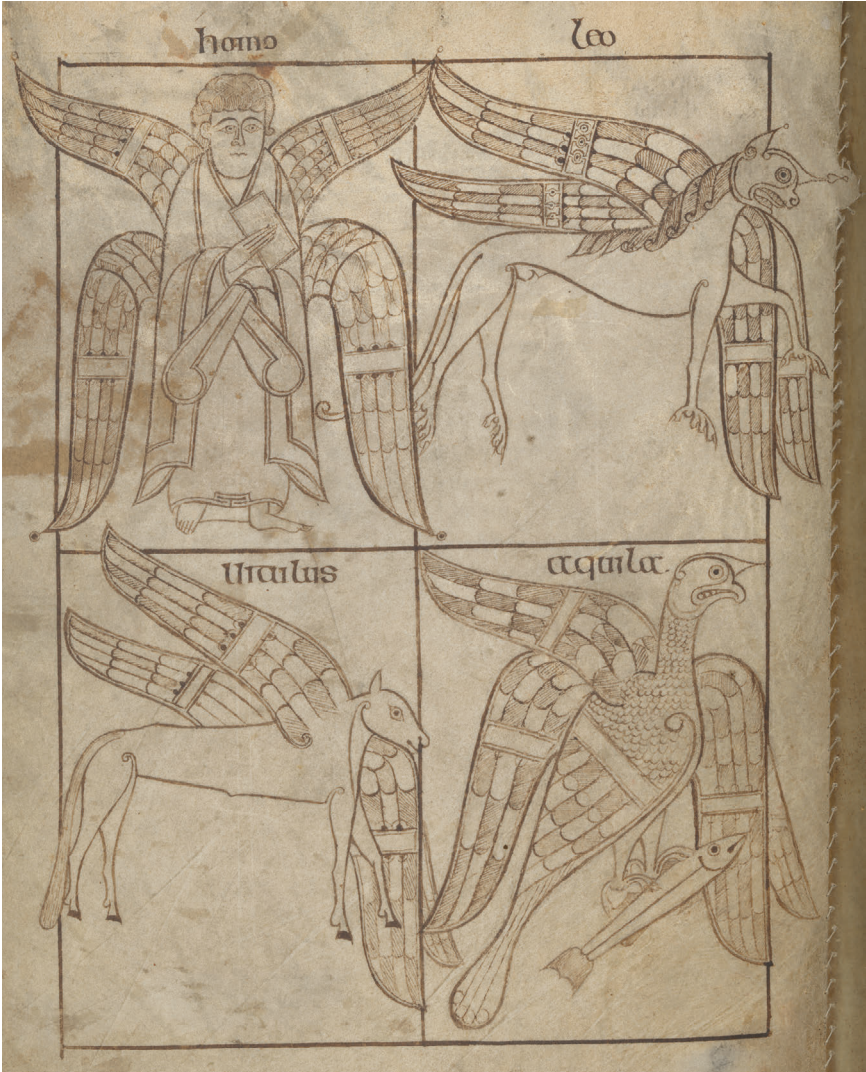


Figure 3.9 The Book of Armagh. Four-symbol page facing Matthew's Gospel. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 52, fol. 32v.

a similar full-length calf is shown alone but with small medallions on its wings depicting the faces of the man, lion and eagle, which suggests the harmony of Luke with the other three gospels. The allusion to Ezekiel's vision (where each beast has the faces of all four creatures) again harmonises the two visions of the beasts in the Old Testament and the New. The Book of Kells fol. 27v shows Luke's symbol as a calf (not an ox, as in Ezekiel 1:10), but with two pairs of wings and small horns, which offers a visual counterpart to Jerome's harmonisation in the *Plures fuisse* of the description of this creature in the Old and New Testament visions as *bos* and *vitulus* respectively.

The calf with splayed-out legs and with horned head turned towards the viewer, which appears twice in the Lichfield Gospels and in the evangelist portrait of Luke in the Lindisfarne Gospels, hints at a significance which is heavily spelt out in a didactic context elsewhere. The mysteries of the gospel were symbolically handed on in a catechetical ceremony, the *traditio evangeliorum*, to which Bede testifies. It involved reading out the four gospel *incipits* and expounding the way in which the individual gospels are epitomised in their [177] opening words and related to their respective evangelist symbols. The text of the ceremony in Gallican sacramentaries, including the Bobbio Missal, describes Luke's symbol as *vitulus* and explicitly identifies its two horns with the Old and New Testaments and its four hoofs with the four gospels; in the late eighth-century Frankish Gellone Sacramentary the initial letter of Luke's name in this text is formed from the disembodied horned head and legs of a calf, and points like [178] a bizarre *nota bene* sign to the relevant passage.

Another kind of contrast to the Insular gospel books is offered by the St Augustine Gospels, a sixth-century Italian uncial book brought to Anglo-Saxon England early, possibly with the Gregorian mission. Facing the chastely unadorned opening page of St Luke's Gospel, the evangelist is pictured like a classical philosopher, enthroned in an elaborate Roman architectural setting with lapidary inscription, and with a half-length figure of a winged ox in the arch above him. Luke is flanked by twelve tiny scenes unique to his gospel, beginning with Zacharias at the altar.

The visual language of the Insular gospel books is very different from both of these continental manuscripts. In the Lichfield Gospels a drum roll of decoration in the form of a portrait page, a four-symbol page, and then a cross-carpet page announces the framed and ornamented *incipit* of Luke's Gospel, pp. 218–21. The first of the three prefatory pages presents the Lucan symbol of the full-length horned calf, its body arched over the haloed head of a figure who holds two crossed rods or staffs like sceptres (Plate 3.4). There is only the barest outline of a throne framing the figure. The stylised image, composed of two-dimensional abstract shapes of patterned symmetry, is a radical departure from the norms of Mediterranean figural art. The antique convention of the author portrait has here been transformed to show, not a scribe at work or an earthly author inspired by his muse, but an evocation of the aspect of Christ's identity particularly revealed in Luke's Gospel, which exegetes saw figured in Luke's symbolic calf and epitomised in the first event the gospel describes. The opening scene in Luke's Gospel introduces the Incarnation of Christ by describing Zacharias, the last of the priests of Aaron's line, making

an offering at the altar in the Temple. From the time of Origen commentators had noted that, read in the light of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chapters 5, 7–10), this scene in Luke prefigures Christ's role as both the new High Priest and the new sacrifice, which superseded the Aaronic priesthood and its blood offerings. Luke's symbol, a sacrificial calf, alludes to this sacerdotal mystery.

Patristic and Insular exegetes interpreted the miraculous budding of Aaron's dry rod, by which he had been designated the first High Priest (Num. 17:8), as a further image of Christ, and specifically a prefiguring of the Cross which at the Crucifixion was revealed to [179] be the Tree of Life. This linking had been given pictorial expression in the canon tables of the sixth-century Syriac Rabbula Gospels, which carry an elaborate cycle of Old and New Testament scenes depicting the harmonised reading of the fourfold gospel as the fulfilment of the Law. The Lucan scene of Zacharias at the altar is here directly paired with the figure of the High Priest, Aaron, who is holding his budding rod and has the sign of the Cross already delineated in the twelve stones of his priestly breastplate. The Lichfield Gospels image alludes to the same traditional understanding of Luke's presentation of Christ's priestly and sacrificial identity, and to the harmony of the Old Testament and the New, but in a more abstract idiom. The enthroned Lichfield figure ceremonially displays a budding green rod which branches in the shape of a crosier; the other rod flowers in the form of the Cross. Their crossed stems form a prominent *chi* across his breast. His haloed head is framed within the large lozenge shape formed by the rods, and by the wings and splayed legs of the symbol of the calf above.

This hieratic figure positioned at the outer entrance to Luke's Gospel text communicates a sense of the numinous and visually epitomises the testimony of Luke's Gospel regarding Christ's priesthood and Passion. The four-symbol page which now follows on p. 219 has the function of setting Luke's distinctive testimony within the harmony of the fourfold gospel. All four winged creatures are shown 'full of eyes' (Ezekiel:18; Revelation 4:8) and Luke's symbol is again depicted as a horned calf, which in this context may have been read as alluding to the harmony of the Old Testament and the New. In the cross-carpet page which follows on p. 220 the sign of the Cross, denoting the glorified Christ, is conspicuously revealed in the dominant outlined image of the Cross which spans the page (Plate 3.5). It is also concealed in the profusion of ornament, made up of the interlaced bodies of birds and quadrupeds, outside that outline; the page offers a visual analogy to the exegetical concept that the identity of Christ is both proclaimed by and hidden within the literal text of Scripture. On the facing page the opening words of Luke's Gospel are framed, magnified and decoratively distorted, which does not facilitate their literal reading but presents the words as angular, rune-like signs of the mystery they enshrine (Plate 3.6). If such a four-page decorative sequence as survives for Luke originally announced all four gospels in the manuscript, and if its now missing prefatory texts and canon tables were [181] decorated on the same scale, the Lichfield Gospels would indeed have been a very splendid book. Concepts from the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity have here been so assimilated to an Insular visual tradition as to be almost unrecognizable to the casual eye.



Plate 3.5 The Lichfield Gospels, Carpet Page. © Lichfield Cathedral, p. 220.



Plate 3.6 The Lichfield Gospels, *incipit* of Luke. © Lichfield Cathedral, p. 221.

The Crucifixion in the Durham Gospels: an image of orthodoxy

In the earliest extant fragment of an Insular illuminated manuscript (Durham A.II.10), the final verses of Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 28:16–20) are written in an ornate minuscule script, different from the majuscule script used for the rest of the gospel. In the Lichfield Gospels the last two verses of Matthew are centred and occupy a whole page which is decoratively framed. It is obviously difficult to interpret the meaning of these and other examples beyond saying that the passage seems to have been important. In the Durham Gospels, however, there are clues to suggest how it may have been read there. On fol. 38 the text of Matthew 28:17–20 is isolated and arranged to fit within a cruciform decorated frame, exactly corresponding in outline with the framed Crucifixion scene on the verso, indicating that text and image may be related (Figure 3.10 and Plate 3.7).

Christ is shown alive, wearing a long robe and with his arms extended on the Cross in a priestly gesture of prayer. This visualisation is ultimately derived from Crucifixion images of the kind surviving in the Rabbula Gospels, icons from Sinai, and Byzantine-influenced works in Rome; but here, stripped of narrative detail and spatial depth, it has been dramatically transformed into a linear design of abstract shapes on the same plane as the frame. The two human figures of the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer below the horizontal bar of the Cross, and the two angelic beings above it, symmetrically flank the central axis. The cross-bar is abnormally low so that the four terminals of the Cross suggest the four cardinal directions of its reach. The Cross and the body of Christ span earth and heaven.

The image puts into arresting visual terms a common patristic linking of St John's account of the Crucifixion and of Christ's Second [182] Coming in judgement at the end of time. St John describes the wounding of Christ as a fulfilment of the prophecy, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' (John 19:37; Zacharias 12:10). He specifies that Christ's side was pierced only after his death, yet the Durham picture shows Christ both wounded and alive, a pictorial device for conveying John's spiritual interpretation of the Crucifixion as the triumph over death. The identifying *titulus* written on the Cross above Christ's head simply says: 'This is Jesus, the king of the Jews'. The wording is from Matthew 27:37, which does not have the detail of the three languages of the title-board. Its meaning is infinitely extended, however, for the reader who sees that the *titulus* is here flanked by two additional letters, *alpha* and *omega*, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, (looking like A and W), and by the words *initium et finis* ('the beginning and the end'). These additions allude to the apocalyptic vision of the Lord at his Second Coming, 'when every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him'. Though recognizably the same person who was pierced, he appears in the vision 'clothed with a garment down to the foot', is adored by the angelic host and proclaims his eternal divinity with the words: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, which is, and was, and which is to come, the Almighty' (Revelation 1:7–8, 13; cf. John 19:37). The Durham Gospels' image

simultaneously presents Christ crucified and exalted in glory. It is a powerful devotional icon in which Christ's gaze draws the present beholder to 'look upon him who was pierced' and recognise his true identity now. The image also speaks by means of inscriptions surrounding the frame. The epigrammatic upper text, for those who can puzzle it out, further discloses Christ's twofold nature.

The picture is clearly not a literal or didactic illustration of the end of Matthew's Gospel text highlighted on the recto, which culminates in Christ's final command to his disciples to go and 'teach all peoples, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world' (Matthew 28:19–20). Rather, the Crucifixion picture of Christ as both human and divine, Saviour and Judge, distils the very essence of the gospel which is taken to all peoples. Christ's words in Matthew's text include a Trinitarian baptismal formula, which therefore appears in baptismal liturgies. Because it implicitly proclaims Christ's divinity, it was also important in exegesis and early councils. [184]

The Council of Chalcedon (451), in acknowledging Pope Leo the Great's important articulation of orthodox belief in the humanity and divinity of Christ (which was cited by seventh-century popes and councils), characterised Leo as preserving those final instructions of Christ to his disciples to teach and baptise all peoples, 'teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you'.

The Durham image affirms orthodox belief but also points to its spiritual implications; patristic and Insular commentators interpreted the piercing of Christ's side and the issue of water and blood, uniquely described in John 19:34, as the opening of the source of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, through which Christ sustains the faithful until he comes again. Bede describes how the resurrected Christ had assured his disciples 'that by his hidden presence he would fulfil what he had promised: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world"' [Matthew 28:20]. Bede adds, 'For after we have been buried in death with Christ through baptism [Romans 6:4] [. . .] it is necessary for us, in this wilderness [i.e. in this earthly life], to have the Lord's guidance. May he lead us to the heavenly kingdom'.

The inscription around the sides and lower edge of the picture is in the first person plural. It describes how Christ, overcoming the author of death, 'renews our life if we suffer along with him', it recalls how 'He rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father, so that when we have been restored to life, we may reign with him'. This evokes a chain of Pauline texts, including the fundamental concept of baptism as a sharing in Christ's death in order to share in his risen glory (Romans 6:3–4). The inscribed image prompts meditation not simply on the historical moment of baptism but on the continuing process of inner conversion and repentance begun at baptism, the daily crucifixion or dying to the world which is a central theme in the works of Cassian and in other literature of the monastic life. The Prologue to the Rule of St Benedict addresses those mindful of the coming Judgement and desirous of the heavenly life: 'faithfully observing



Plate 3.7 The Durham Gospels. The Crucifixion. Reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral. MS A.II.17, fol. 38.3v.

his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may also share in his kingdom'. Columbanus repeatedly exhorted his monks and others to have perseverance 'up to the end' and to become sharers in Christ's Passion: 'if we suffer together with him, together we shall reign' (2 Tim. 2:12; Romans 8:17).

Like the inscriptions of the Durham Crucifixion, Columbanus' [186] spiritual counsel to follow the example of the crucified Christ is combined with an explicit declaration of doctrinal orthodoxy on the twofold nature of Christ revealed in the mystery of the Cross, as that had been repeatedly expounded by Leo the Great and affirmed by Gregory the Great. Leo had preached that the Cross of Christ set up for human salvation was both a mystery or *sacramentum* 'whereby the divine power takes effect' and an *exemplum* stirring devotion. The power to follow the Cross by *imitatio* was supplied by Christ's continuing hidden presence with the faithful:

If we unhesitatingly believe with the heart what we profess with the mouth, in Christ we are crucified, we are dead, we are buried, on the third day we too are raised. Hence the Apostle says, 'If you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting on God's right hand [. . .]' [Colossians 3:1–4]. In order that the faithful may know that they have the means whereby to spurn the lusts of the world and be lifted to the wisdom that is above, the Lord promises us his presence, saying, 'Behold, I am with you always, even till the end of the world' [Matthew 28:20].

Inscriptions, *tituli*, epigraphs and the interpenetration of text and image have been a frequent feature of Insular works of art discussed here. The placing of the inscriptions around the Durham Gospels' Crucifixion picture adapts the classical rhetorical device of *ekphrasis*; the texts do not provide a literal description of the visual image but direct the viewer's reading of it and imprint its significance on the mind's eye by eliciting a response. It is an early and particularly elaborate example of a practice sometimes seen on Byzantine icons and the Roman works they influenced; the Durham Crucifixion's inscriptions are not, however, in Roman capitals or the uncial emulated in the Codex Amiatinus and Wilfrid's gospel book, but in Insular majuscule.

The image of the Durham Gospels, without its inscriptions, became the characteristic form of the Irish iconography of the Crucifixion in vellum, metalwork and stone. It went through a further process of reduction, for example on the eighth-century Athlone gilt-bronze plaque, where Christ's priestly robe and the wings of the cherubim are covered with Celtic spiral ornament, interlace and fret patterns, and the *titulus* of the Cross is replaced by three interlinked spirals (Figure 3.11). For a viewer unaware of St John's account of the opening of Christ's side or its traditional exegesis there is nothing in the image which will provide that information. The Durham Gospels' [187] Crucifixion looks very different from works which display *Romanitas* in their script and style; however, through



Figure 3.11 Athlone Crucifixion Plaque. National Museum of Ireland.

its iconography, inscriptions and juxtaposed text it demonstrates concern with central issues of Christological orthodoxy which were defined and defended in the series of ecumenical councils and in the Lateran council attested at the Council of Hatfield. The text from Matthew which the Crucifixion picture highlights was quoted by Insular writers not only to show that the gospel in reaching the islands at the ends of the earth had truly been preached to all peoples, but that they had received the same faith Christ had handed down through his apostles and their spiritual descendants throughout the ages. [189]

‘ALL THAT PETER STANDS FOR’ The *Romanitas* of the Codex Amiatinus reconsidered

The choice of uncial script in Northumbria in the 660s and 670s has been described as a political act. Thomas Charles-Edwards has suggested that the illuminated gospel book bishop Wilfrid commissioned for Ripon, which was written in letters of gold on purple parchment in the antique manner, and therefore almost certainly in uncial script, would have announced opposition to those in the Easter controversy whom Wilfrid described as *Quartodecimans* and ‘the schismatics of Britain and Ireland’.¹ The association of uncial script with Rome and the papal mission, it is argued, would also have acted as a challenge to Insular liturgical gospel book traditions in Northumbria in which the distinctive combination of Irish half-uncial script with Irish, Pictish and Anglo-Saxon decorative elements presupposed the missionary achievements of Iona.²

Like Ripon and Hexham, Wearmouth and Jarrow were built *iuxta Romanorum morem* and adopted the Roman Easter and tonsure.³ Wilfrid’s attitude towards the monks of Iona and those who had fellowship with them differed, however, from that of Ceolfrith and Bede. Wearmouth-Jarrow did not regard the Columbans as heretics or schismatics and had connections with Lindisfarne and Adomnán of Iona.⁴ This contrast prompts a question. [367] If Wilfrid’s *romanitas* aimed ‘to demonstrate to the Northumbrians the superiority of Rome over Iona, of St Peter over Columba’, what then did the *romanitas* of Wearmouth-Jarrow express, specifically through its great uncial manuscript, the Codex Amiatinus?

The book was produced during Ceolfrith’s abbacy of Wearmouth-Jarrow (688–716). Recent commentators have argued that it was intended from its inception,

1 T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000) 320–43: 334, 329; *Vita Wilfridi*, 17, 12, Bertram Colgrave (ed. and trans.), *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge 1927) 35, 24.

2 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 332, 325.

3 Bede, *Historia Abbatum* 4, 5, 7, Charles Plummer (ed.), *Beda Opera Historica* (Oxford 1896) 1, 367–70. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 5, 15, 21, B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (eds. and trans.), *Bede’s Ecclesiastical history of the English people* (Oxford 1969), hereafter *HE*.

4 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 320–22 and Clare Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid and the Irish* (Jarrow 2003), for the three groupings within the Northumbrian church after the Synod of Whitby.

or from the inclusion of its illustrated opening quire, as a gift for Rome.⁵ It is magisterial in scale (1,030 folios measuring c. 505 × 340mm) and in execution. The main script is the formal Roman uncial of the period of Gregory the Great, imitated with great consistency.⁶ The opening quire includes many features deriving from the art of Late Antiquity. Inscriptions are displayed beneath arcades, on *tabulae ansatae* or in frames ornamented with *hederae*; there are touches of silver and gold and one purple-painted page has lettering in yellow orpiment, simulating chrysography; the figural frontispiece has a spatial depth and realism quite alien to Insular gospel-book illumination.

The dedication: *caput ecclesiae* and the ends of the earth

The dedication on fol. 1v draws on a number of patristic themes which help suggest why the book’s evocation of Christian Roman antiquity made it an appropriate presentation volume for Ceolfrith to take when he and members of his community left for Rome in 716:

*Corpus ad eximii merito/ uenerabile Petri/ quem caput ecclesiae/ dedicate
alta fides/ Ceolfridus Anglorum/ extremis de finibus abbas/ deuoti affectus/
pignora mitto mei/ meque meosque optans/ tanti inter gaudia patris/
in caelis memorem/ semper habere locum.* (‘To the body of the illustrious Peter, justly to be honoured, whom deep faith declares head of the Church, I, Ceolfrith, abbot from the farthest boundaries of the *Angli*, send pledges of my devoted feeling, desiring for me and mine that, among the joys of so great a father, we might always have a place in the memory of heaven’.)⁷ [368]

Ceolfrith’s dedication of the book *ad corpus*, to the body of St Peter, suggests that the gift was to be presented at Peter’s shrine. This reflects Rome’s fundamental importance as the site of the martyrdom and relics of the princes of the apostles. The naming of Peter rather than the pope as the recipient gives voice to the belief that in his apostolic and episcopal dignity Peter does not cease to live and preside in his own see and to share in Christ’s eternal high priesthood.⁸ Imperial pagan

5 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Amiatino 1 (A). Paul Meyvaert, ‘Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus’, *Speculum* 71 (1996) 827–83: 838; Lawrence Nees, ‘Problems of form and function in early medieval illustrated bibles from northwest Europe’, John Williams (ed.), *Imaging the medieval bible* (Pennsylvania 1999) 121–77: 148–51, 156; Celia Chazelle, ‘Ceolfrid’s gift to St Peter: the first quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the evidence of its Roman destination’, *Early Mediev Europe* 12 (2003) 129–57: 146, fig. 3.

6 Malcolm Parkes, *The scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow 1982) 1–2, 20–21.

7 The dedication is also recorded in the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi*, 37: C. Plummer (ed.), *Historia Abbatum Auctore Anonymo, Bedae Opera Historica*, I (Oxford 1896) 402.

8 See, for example, Leo the Great, *Sermo* 5.3, 4, pl. 54, 154–55: J. P. Freeland and A. J. Conway (trans.), *Leo the Great: sermons* (Washington DC 1996) 32.

Rome had been designated *caput mundi*, a title re-interpreted to describe papal Rome; the foundational see of Peter also came to be honoured as *caput urbium* and *caput orbis*, *caput ecclesiarum* and *caput ecclesiae*.⁹ Central to the range of connotations which the concept of papal Rome's headship acquired was the Pauline image of the church as the one body of Christ with diverse members (I Corinthians 12:12–30; cf. Ephesians 4:4–5) and of Christ as the head of the whole Church which is his body: *caput supra omnem ecclesiam, quae est corpus ipsius* (Ephesians 1:22; cf. Colossians 1:18). Leo the Great influentially expressed the idea that from Peter, 'as from the head', Christ's gifts flow to the body of the whole church.¹⁰ In the dedication of the Codex Amiatinus it is Peter who is directly hailed as *caput ecclesiae*. But in homilies on the Chair of Peter and the feast of Peter and Paul, Bede followed Cyprian and other Fathers in emphasising that Peter's divinely inspired confession of Christ's identity, and his first place among the apostles, deriving from Christ himself (Matthew 16:15–19), signified above all the oneness of the faith and the unity of the Church entrusted to Peter's pastoral care (John 21:15–17).¹¹

Ceolfrith's verses also make allusion to the *topos* of the civilised centre and the barbarous edge of the world, another classical image which had been transformed by patristic and papal writers in the light of Scripture. Imperial Rome had regarded the conquest of Britain as symbolising the world-wide extent of Roman authority. The conversion of the Irish, and later the Anglo-Saxons, Insular peoples who had not been under Roman rule, therefore became an important part of claims that the church had surpassed the bounds of imperial Rome, and that papal Rome was the earthly head of a [369] truly universal spiritual dominion.¹² It was the centre from which the successors of the apostolic mission begun in Jerusalem had continued to teach all peoples, *ad ultimum terrae*, as commanded by Christ and foretold by the prophets. Isaiah's summoning of distant Gentiles, 'Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from afar' (Isaiah 49:1), was marked as a lection in the Codex Amiatinus.¹³ In a letter to Oswiu of Northumbria, c. 666, Pope Vital-

9 For discussion of key terms and concepts in the formation of papal primacy, and early Irish responses, see Damian Bracken, 'Authority and duty: Columbanus and the primacy of Rome', *Peritia* 16 (2002), 168–213: 170–74, 182–85.

10 *Ep.* 10.1, *PL* 54, 629; cf. *Sermo* 4.2, *Sermo* 82.3, *Ep.* 98.1: *PL* 54, 149, 424, 959.

11 D. Hurst (ed.) *Opera Homiletica*, *CCSL* 122, 1.70, 2.22 (Turnhout 1965) 146, 347; L. Martin and D. Hurst (trans.), *Bede: homilies on the gospels*, 2 vols (Kalamazoo 1991) I, 202–03; and II, 227. D.J. Grimes, 'Petrine primacy: perspectives of two Insular commentators (AD 600–800)', *Proc Patristic Mediev Conf* 12–13 (1989) 149–58: 154–55.

12 R.A. Markus, 'Chronicle and theology: Prosper of Aquitaine', C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (eds.), *The inheritance of historiography 350–900* (Exeter 1986) 31–43; T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Palladius, Prosper and Leo the Great: mission and primatial authority', D. Dumville (ed.), *Saint Patrick, A.D. 493–1993* (Woodbridge 1993) 1–12; J. O'Reilly, 'Islands and idols at the ends of the earth: exegesis and conversion in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*', in S. Lebecqz, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (eds.), *Bède le vénérable: entre tradition et postérité* (Lille 2004) 119–145: 119–28, 132.

13 Fol. 526: Richard Marsden, *The text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge 1995) 189.

ian had related Isaiah’s prophecy to the deeper conversion of the whole island, and all the islands, ‘to the catholic and apostolic faith’. He charged Oswui to ‘follow the holy rule of the chief of the apostles in all things, both in the celebration of Easter and in everything delivered by the holy apostles, Peter and Paul’.¹⁴

Patristic and papal images of Petrine Rome had long been adapted by Insular writers to furnish their own orthodox credentials.¹⁵ A century before Ceolfrið’s acclamation of Peter as *caput ecclesiae*, Columbanus in his letter to Boniface IV in 613 had affirmed papal claims that Rome, because of its association with the princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul, and possession of their relics, was the head of all churches: *Roma orbis terrarum caput est ecclesiarum*.¹⁶ Columbanus used this epithet and the geographical *topos* of centre and periphery as a means of demonstrating to the pope that the Irish, notwithstanding their physical remoteness at the world’s edge, had maintained the apostolic faith they had received from Rome and were therefore full and orthodox members of the universal Church, not Judaisers or schismatics.¹⁷ Significantly, he identified the evangelical and apostolic catholic teaching they had received from the disciples of Peter and Paul with the sacred canon of Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The interpretation of Scripture was crucial to questions of orthodoxy and to the dating of Easter, and the issues merged during the seventh-century [370] Insular controversy. The difficulties of interpreting the biblical texts on which the dating of Easter was based led to a growing consensus in the Church on the need for unity in this matter, eventually sanctioned by Rome.¹⁸ The uniqueness of Christ’s commission to Peter (Matthew 16:18,19) was acknowledged by all parties at the Synod of Whitby, though they still differed on its implications regarding observation of the so-called Roman Easter. Columbanus had combined loyalty to the traditional eighty-four-year Easter cycle of the Irish and Britons with affirmation of the universal nature of the Church and the orthodoxy of the remote western churches, demonstrated in their reception of the faith from Rome. The geographical *topos* used by Columbanus was differently adapted at later stages of the controversy to condemn the perceived particularism of those at the ends of the earth who continued to use that same eighty-four-year Easter cycle.

The Irish writer Cummian in his letter *De controversia paschali* to Abbot Ségené of Iona and the hermit Béccán, c. 632/633, and Wilfrid in his confrontation with Colmán of Lindisfarne in Bede’s account of the synod of Whitby in 664, also identified Rome as the source from which they had received the faith,

14 HE 3.29.

15 J. O’Reilly, ‘The art of authority’, T.M. Charles-Edwards (ed.), *After Rome* (Oxford 2003) 141–89; 141–44, 158–59; O’Reilly, ‘Islands and idols’, 123–24.

16 Ep 5, G. S. M. Walker (ed. and trans.), *Sancti Columbani Opera*, SLH II (Dublin 1970) 48, ll. 34–35; the context is discussed by Bracken, ‘Authority and duty’, 175–82.

17 *Sancti Columbani Opera*, 38, ll. 24–30; 7, ll. 5–22; also Ep.1, 9, ll. 18–21. For the term ‘Judaizer’, see below and n. 20.

18 Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 405–15.

and thereby asserted the orthodox position of Irish and Anglo-Saxon *Romani*.¹⁹ But they each went on to exploit the ancient negative associations of the physical remoteness of the islands of Ocean in order to describe what they saw as the spiritually peripheral and even outsider status of those fellow-islanders who had not adopted the Roman Easter of the universal Church.²⁰ The geographical *topos* as used by Cummean and Wilfrid was combined with the allegation that their opponents in the Easter controversy had, like the Jews, interpreted the Old Testament account of the Passover literally rather than spiritually. This gave renewed expression to a stock argument used at a much earlier stage of the Easter controversy, in the fourth-century Mediterranean world. Athanasius, Jerome and others criticised 'Judaising' minorities of isolated Christian groups or individuals attached to local, temporal concerns and to the literal interpretation of Scripture, and had polemically contrasted them with the diverse peoples of the universal Church who shared in the unity of orthodox belief and interpreted Scripture spiritually.²¹ [371]

Cummean's and Wilfrid's use of the *topos* of the ends of the earth is to be further distinguished from that of more moderate *Romani*, both Irish and Anglo-Saxon, as represented by Adomnán of Iona and Ceolfrith. Adomnán (d. 704) was unable to persuade his own community to follow the Roman Easter, but in his *Vita Columbae* he defended them from any hostile interpretation of Iona's location as marginal by showing its importance as a centre of the Church's mission and witness in the Insular world. Skilfully using the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, he presented Iona's founding father as a saint embodying the highest biblical, patristic and hagiographic models of holiness, recognisable throughout the universal Church. Columba, therefore, 'although he lived in this small and remote island of the Britannic Ocean', merited that his name should be renowned throughout Ireland and Britain, Spain, Gaul and Italy, 'and even as far away as the city of Rome, which is the head of all cities (*quae caput est omnium ciuitatum*)'.²²

Similarly, the dedication inscribed in the Codex Amiatinus, from *Ceolfridus Anglorum extremis de finibus abbas*, acted as a rhetorical foil to the self-evident *romanitas* of the great uncial codex it prefaces. It implicitly proclaims that abbot Ceolfrith and his gift came from a people who, though physically far distant from Rome, were not spiritually remote from the *caput ecclesiae*, but manifestly part of the universal Church. The epitaph on Gregory the Great's tomb in St Peter's hailed

19 M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (eds. and trans.), *Cummean's letter 'De Controversia Paschali'* (Toronto 1988) 92–93; 80–81, ll. 177–801; *HE* 3.25; *Vita Wilfridi*, 5.

20 *De Controversia Paschali*, 72, ll. 107–10; *HE* 3.25; See also Honorius I's letter to the Irish, c. 628, as summarised by Bede, *HE* 2.19.

21 David Brakke, 'Jewish flesh and Christian spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria', *J Christ Stud* 4 (2001) 453–81: 467–69; H. J. Newman, 'Jerome's Judaizers', *J Christ Stud* 4 (2001) 421–52: 422, 424. For the theme of Judaizing in Bede's account of the Insular Easter controversy, see the 'Introduction' to Seán Connolly (trans.), *Bede on the Temple* (Liverpool 1995) xxv–xlv.

22 A.O. Anderson and M.O. Anderson (eds. and trans.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, rev. edn (Oxford 1991) 232.

him as the high priest and pastor who had first converted the *Angli* to Christ.²³ The *Amiatinus* dedication pre-dates Bede’s well-known usage of the Gregorian term *Angli* to describe his people, after their conversion, as a single *gens*.²⁴

Earthly notions of centre and periphery further recede with Ceolfrith’s closing prayer in the dedication that ‘me and mine’ should forever have a *locus* of remembrance in heaven. He acknowledges Peter’s role as the divinely appointed keeper of the entrance to heaven (cf. Matthew 16:19), and therefore the importance of union with him, but also conveys a more intimate devotion to Peter as spiritual father and patron in heaven. The prayer was given added poignancy by Ceolfrith’s belated revelation of his intention to accompany the delegation bearing his gifts to Rome and to await death in contemplation at the *limina* of the apostles, so by voluntary exile exchanging one *patria* for another.²⁵ Ceolfrith’s ceremonial leave-taking from St Peter’s, [372] Wearmouth, for the journey towards St Peter’s, Rome, made clear the spiritual significance of his pilgrimage: Rome, like Jerusalem itself, constituted the earthly figure of the heavenly city.²⁶

Ceolfrith’s successor Hwaetberht immediately sent his felicitations to Gregory II on his appointment to the papacy less than a year earlier. Gregory was learned in the Scriptures and had been made *sacellarius* and given charge of the papal library in the time of Pope Sergius (687–701), during whose pontificate Hwaetberht had studied in Rome for some time and Ceolfrith had sent a delegation of monks to obtain a letter of privilege similar to that which Benedict Biscop had obtained from Pope Agatho (678–81).²⁷ It seems likely that Ceolfrith in 716 would have sought a further renewal from Gregory II of this exemption from external interference and confirmation of the special relationship with Rome it implied.²⁸ Replying to Hwaetberht, Gregory spoke of Ceolfrith’s death on the journey, and of how he had sent ‘as an everlasting memorial a gift to my Lord and our common patron, the blessed Peter, Prince of the apostles. Approving of his faith in offering this gift, we have judged him worthy of constant commemoration’.²⁹

23 Recorded by Bede, *HE* 2.1.

24 As discussed by Nicholas Brooks, *Bede and the English* (Jarrow 1999) 17–20.

25 *Vita Ceolfridi*, 21; for the idea of *peregrinatio* as a return (*reditus*) to our true *patria*, see M.A. Claussen, ‘“Peregrinatio” and “Peregrini” in Augustine’s *City of God*’, *Traditio* 46 (1991), 33–75:71–73. For changing one’s *patria* for spiritual citizenship of Rome and the heavenly community of saints, see John Curran, *Pagan city and Christian capital. Rome in the fourth century* (Oxford 2000) 153.

26 *Vita Ceolfridi*, 23–27; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *The world of Bede and the city of Rome* (Jarrow 1994) 9–14.

27 *Historia Abbatum* 15, 18; *HE* 4.18; L. Duchesne, *Le Liber pontificalis*, 2 vols. (Paris 1886–92) I, 396. Bede records that Gregory when *archidiaconus* had replied (*rescripsit*) to queries on Scripture from an *amicus de Britannia*, M.L.W. Laistner (ed.), *Retractio in Actus Apostolorum*, *CCSL* 21 (Turnhout 1983) ch. 19, 155.

28 Patrick Wormald, ‘Bede and Benedict Biscop’, G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the Venerable Bede* (London 1976) 141–69:147–49.

29 *Vita Ceolfridi*, 39, D.H. Farmer (trans.), *The age of Bede* (Harmondsworth 1983) 228.

The pledges or assurances (*pignora*) of devotion which Ceolfrith had offered St Peter in gift exchange may refer not simply to the presentation of the magnificent codex among other gifts, but to the nature of the book and what it symbolically represented. Its type, a pandect or complete Bible in one volume, was rare: it is the earliest extant Latin Bible.³⁰

Unity in diversity and the harmony of Scripture

Ceolfrith had brought back a pandect of the *vetus translatio* from his first pilgrimage to Rome in c. 678. Most scholars believe this Bible was the sixth-century Codex Grandior, produced at Vivarium for Cassiodorus, which, to judge from Cassiodorus's description in his *Institutiones*, contained Jerome's partial revision of the Old Latin against the hexaplaric Septuagint.³¹ The [373] Codex Amiatinus is not simply a copy of the Codex Grandior. Its biblical text is the *noua translatio*, that is, the version 'translated by the blessed Jerome from the Hebrew and Greek'.³² It was edited, furthermore, from a variety of sources.³³ The *Amiatinus* text is laid out in double columns and in sense units, *per cola et commata*, as Jerome had advised and as was adopted by Cassiodorus, not in the Codex Grandior, but in another of his complete Bibles, the multi-volumed work known as the *novem codices*. There are differences between the illustrated prefatory quire of the Codex Amiatinus and what is known of the illustrations in the lost Codex Grandior. Scholars have recognised the creative character of the *Amiatinus* in its selection and adaptation of antique images, some of which may have come from other sources, possibly including the *novem codices*.³⁴ A striking feature of the quire is the number of elaborately displayed but apparently conflicting listings of the books of the Bible and the honoured place given to the Septuagint in this 'Vulgate' Bible, which has sometimes been seen as evidence that the quire is just a splendid pastiche. It will be argued here, on the contrary, that the illustrated pages form a thematic unity and that there is a coherent link between the prefatory quire and the contents of the Codex Amiatinus, its outward *romanitas* and the context in which it was produced.

30 For later examples in the Carolingian realm, see Nees, 'Problems of form and function', 134–48.

31 *Historia abbatum*, 15; *Institutiones* 1.14.2, (ed.) R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1937) 40.

32 *Vita Ceolfridi*, 37, and Bede, *Chronica Maiora*, 534; for the revised text of the gospels and other New Testament books included with Jerome's translation of the Old Testament in the Vulgate, see H.F.D. Sparks, 'Jerome as biblical scholar', in P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge history of the bible*, vol. I (Cambridge 1970) 510–41:519, 522.

33 Raphael Loewe, 'The medieval history of the Latin Vulgate', in G.W.H. Lampe (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the Bible*, vol. II (Cambridge 1969) 102–54, 115–20; Richard Marsden, *The text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge 1995) 76–201:141–42.

34 T. Kendrick, T.J. Brown and R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford (eds.), *Evangelium Quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis*, 2 vols., commentary (Lausanne 1960) 148–56; Perette Michelli, 'What's in the cupboard? Ezra and Matthew reconsidered', in J. Hawkes and S. Mills (eds.), *Northumbria's golden age* (Stroud 1999) 345–57.

The framed lapidary uncial inscription of the dedication to Peter opens with the sign of the Cross. It faced the image of a scribe writing in a codex in front of a cupboard in which all the biblical books are displayed, bound in nine volumes in the general ordering of Augustine. The books appear in the Codex Amiatinus itself in the order of the Septuagint.³⁵ The contents page, fol. 3/IVv, displays the titles of the books of the Old and New Testaments in parallel lists beneath a twin arcade. On the recto of this purple page, the Prologue (a text which probably prefaced Cassiodorus’s Codex Grandior), refers to the different groupings of the biblical books made by Augustine, Jerome and the Septuagint.

In the *Institutiones* Cassiodorus described the creation of his monastic library and the approach to the study of Scripture it represented. He commented [374] that these three arrangements of Scripture, which were appended to the Codex Grandior, probably in diagrammatic form, were not in conflict but made one another intelligible. He showed that the harmony of the various books of the Bible, of the Old Testament and the New, is also reflected in the harmony of the diverse Hebrew, Greek and Latin texts of Scripture and in related works of Christian scholarship, from the Fathers to the present. He emphasised that the church of all lands is of one mind in accepting the divine law, divided in three different ways by different Fathers. Cassiodorus likened the different arrangements of the books of the Bible found in Jerome, Augustine and the Septuagint to the harmony of the four evangelists, in whom faith in the gospel events is uniform, ‘though the manner of speaking divergent’.³⁶

Whether or not Wearmouth-Jarrow had access to the *Institutiones* as well as the Codex Grandior before 716, the point was understood and its visual expression further developed in the Codex Amiatinus.³⁷ Three pages of diagrams set out three different divisions of the books of the Bible according to Jerome, Augustine and the Septuagint.³⁸ The titles of the biblical books are differently grouped and displayed on each page, within cruciform and lozenge frames for Jerome’s ordering, within shield-frames, whose inscriptions begin and end with crosses, for Augustine’s, and within two matched golden crosses for the Septuagint diagram (Figure 4.1). In each diagram the titles of the books from the Old Testament and the New are jointly suspended from a framed *titulus* and medallion, the images

35 Marsden, *Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, 133–39.

36 *Institutiones* 1.12–14, (Mynors, 36–41); L. Webber Jones (trans.), *Introduction to divine and human readings* (New York 1946) 97, 102.

37 Karen Corsano, ‘The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the *Institutiones* of Cassiodorus’, *Scriptorium* 41 (1987), 3–34:23–30, argues that Wearmouth-Jarrow was working from the *Institutiones*; Meyvaert, ‘Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus’, 839–44, argues that Wearmouth-Jarrow did not yet know the *Institutiones* and was working from the Codex Grandior.

38 Fols. 5/VI, 8/VIII, 6/VII respectively; Carol A. Farr, ‘The shape of learning at Wearmouth-Jarrow: the diagram pages in the Codex Amiatinus’, in Hawkes and Mills, *Northumbria’s golden age*, 336–44.

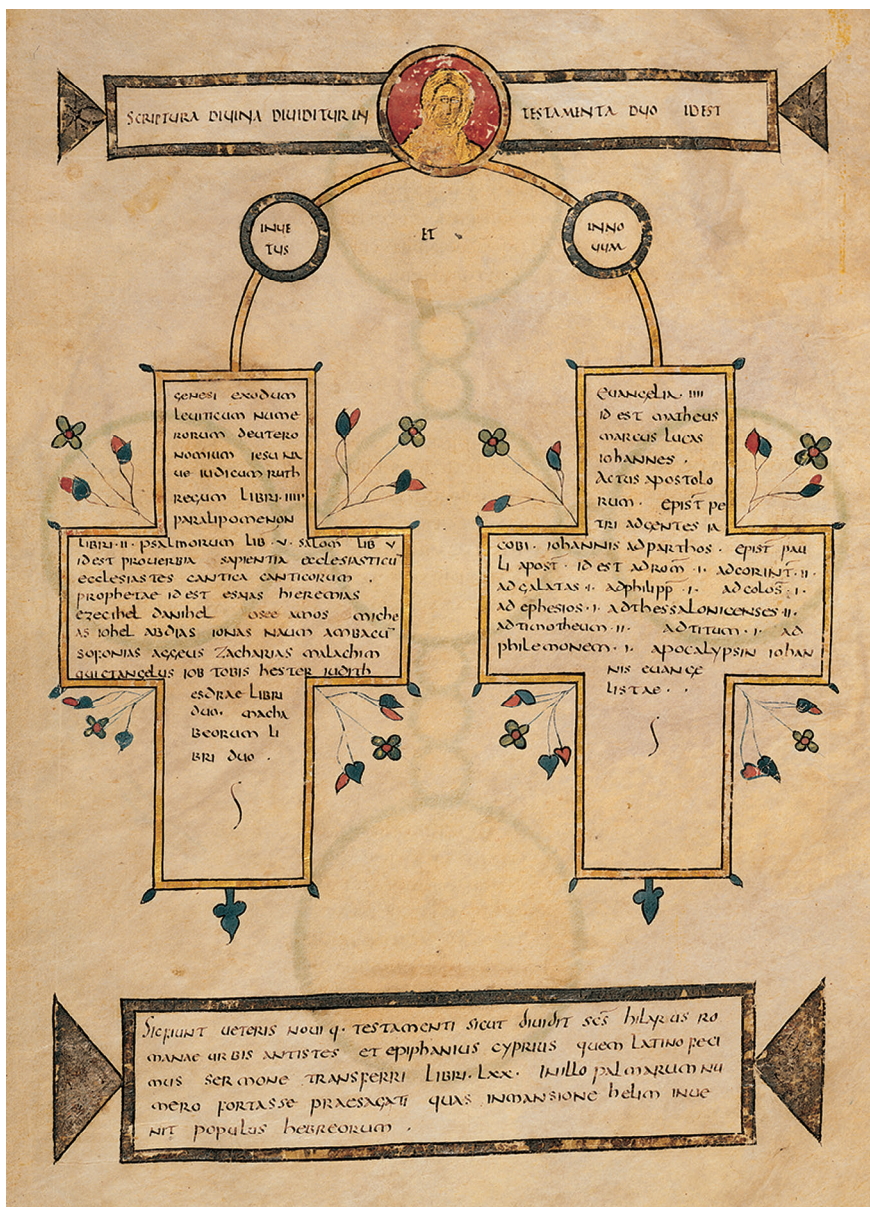


Figure 4.1 The Codex Amiatinus. The Septuagint division of biblical books. MS Amiatino 1, fol. 6/VIIr. Reproduced with permission from the Laurentian Library, Florence, with the concession of the MiBAC.

in the three medallions suggesting the Trinity.³⁹ The three diverse arrangements, and the books of the Old Testament as well as the New, are thereby shown to be in harmony, their unity reflecting the divine source of their inspiration and authority. Framed inscriptions highlight the theme; that on the Jerome page refers to Christ, ‘concerning whom and through whom these things were written’. On the [375] Augustine page, the *titulus* extols ‘that divine unity which is the founder of all things’ and an additional inscription proclaims ‘God the Spirit has poured forth the volumes of divine eloquence from his holy mouth’.

The list of the books of the Pentateuch opening Jerome’s ordering of the Scriptures begins with the Christological sign of the *chi-rho*. This conjunction is elaborated on the verso of the Septuagint diagram where five interlinked circles, arranged in the form of the Cross, are inscribed with the titles of the books of the Pentateuch, each with its brief interpretation taken from Jerome’s influential Epistle 53 (Plate 1.2). Jerome here surveyed every book in the Bible (in yet another variant ordering) to show the unity of the Scriptures in Christ, the divine wisdom, who is concealed in every word, beneath the literal letter of the text. Jerome’s entries on the Pentateuch noted that the Mosaic Law, the sacrifices of the Tabernacle and the priesthood all have a mystical meaning.⁴⁰ The cross-shaped Pentateuch diagram in the *Amiatinus* shows that the five books of the Law, standing for the whole of Hebrew Scripture, reveal Christ.

Multiple signs of the Cross in the listings of the biblical books in the opening quire recall the presence of Christ throughout the Old and New Testaments. The depiction of the unity and harmony of the two Testaments is continued at their physical juncture within the Codex Amiatinus in a figural image of Christ. On the verso of the last page of the Old Testament, fol. 796v, Christ in majesty is flanked by two angelic figures, recalling Old Testament theophanies, but also attended by the four winged creatures from the apocalyptic vision and by the four evangelists who proclaimed his Incarnation and here stand at the corners of the world, indicating the universal mission of the fourfold gospel. The circular inner frame, like that encompassing the interlinked circles of the Pentateuch diagram prefacing the Old Testament, reflects antique gospel-harmony schemes. The *Maiestas* image faces the Vulgate gospel preface *Novum opus*, Jerome’s letter to Pope Damasus in which he emphasised that his revision of the Old Latin translation of the four canonical gospels, authorised by the pope, sought to return to the fountainhead by correcting the mistakes of copyists.⁴¹ The letter introduced the ten Eusebian canon tables as a demonstration of the distinctive and concordant features of the four

39 Nees, ‘Problems of form and function’, 156–72; Chazelle suggests that the medallions, depicting a lamb, a dove and a portrait bust, ‘were probably meant to signify not the three persons of God, but the principal temporal and mystical stages in the divine manifestation through the one person of Christ’; ‘Ceolfrid’s gift to St Peter’, 143–49:148, figs. 7–9; discussion of original order of the quire, 132–39.

40 Ep 53.4, 8; J. Labourt (ed. and trans.), *Saint-Jérôme. Lettres*, 8 vols (Paris 1949–63) III. 8–25.

41 Robert Weber (ed.), *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart 1983) 1515–16.

gospels. The arcaded tables in the Amiatinus are followed by Jerome's preface, *Plures fuisse*, which expounds the diversity and harmony of the four canonical gospels.⁴² [377]

The scribe, the high priestly vesture and the *armarium*

The frontispiece of the *Amiatinus* is enigmatic (Plate 1.1).⁴³ The pose of the scribe, his writing instruments and table are derived from a Late Antique type of evangelist author portrait, yet he wears the head-dress and breastplate of a Jewish high priest. The inscription above the frame refers to the Old Testament figure Ezra, but Ezra is not a high priest in the canonical Book of Ezra and Nehemiah included in the Codex Amiatinus. The *armarium* or book cupboard, moreover, contains not just the gospels written by the evangelists, or the books of the Law restored by Ezra after the Babylonian captivity, but the whole Bible, depicted not as a pandect but as nine separately bound volumes. These paradoxes, and the question of the function of the image in the *Amiatinus*, are not fully resolved by the usual identification of the scribe as Cassiodorus with his *novem codices*, an anomalous depiction of Ezra as high priest, or a conflation of the two.⁴⁴

The problem has been differently approached through studying the components of the iconography – the scribe, the high priestly vestments and the *armarium* of the Scriptures – in the light of patristic exegesis and the work of Cassiodorus and Bede.⁴⁵ The arguments cannot be repeated here in detail, but some points are of relevance to the present inquiry into the significance of the form and contents of the Codex Amiatinus.

The classical *topos* of the trained memory stocked with texts in retrievable order, as in a book chest or a library, was adapted by patristic writers to the task of discerning and internalising the spiritual meaning of sacred texts. In Epistle 53 Jerome described St Paul, an exemplary Christian interpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures, as 'a vessel of the law' (Acts 9:15) and an *armarium* or book chest of the holy Scriptures (*uas legis et sanctorum scripturarum armarium*).⁴⁶ The Fathers urged the faithful Christian reader seeking spiritual wisdom to set up an inner Tabernacle or *arca* containing the tablets of the Law: 'let his memory become

42 D. Hurst and M. Adrian (eds.), *Commentariorum in Matheum*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (CCSL) 77 (Turnhout 1969) 1–4.

43 Corsano, 'The first quire of the Codex Amiatinus', 15–20, argues that it is a pastiche assembled at Wearmouth-Jarrow; George Henderson, 'Cassiodorus and Eadfrith once again', in J. Higgitt and R. M. Spearman (eds.), *The age of migrating ideas* (Stroud 1993) 82–91, regards the Ezra miniature as 'an accurate record of a 6th-century exemplar', though not necessarily from Vivarium, 85. See also Michelli, 'What's in the cupboard?', 345–50.

44 Discussed by Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', 870–82.

45 J. O'Reilly, 'The library of Scripture: views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow', in Paul Binski and William Noel (eds.), *New offerings, ancient treasures: studies in medieval art for George Henderson* (Stroud 2001) 3–39.

46 *Ep* 53.3, 12.

an Ark and library of the books of God because blessed are they who hold God’s commands in memory that they may do [379] them’.⁴⁷ The image could describe the revelation of Christ in Scripture and in the Incarnation: ‘The Ark of the Covenant became for us him of whom it is written, *In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Colossians 2:3)’.⁴⁸

The interpretation of the Old Testament Ark, Tabernacle and priesthood as revelatory of Christ was established in the New Testament, particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Origen’s homilies on Exodus and Leviticus (translated by Rufinus) further expounded the continuing significance for the Christian reader of the biblical account of the construction of the Mosaic Tabernacle and the institution of the Aaronite priesthood. Only the high priest, ritually purified and vested, could enter the Holy of Holies or inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle to come before the Ark of the Law.⁴⁹ Patristic commentators interpreted the literal text of Exodus to show how those who wish to follow Christ, the eternal great High Priest, and enter the heavenly tabernacle ‘not made by hands’ (Hebrews 4:14; 9:11), must first be *spiritually* clothed in high priestly vestments.⁵⁰ They may then enter the inner Tabernacle in order to learn the meaning of the divine commandments contained in ‘the Ark and library of the books of God’, that is, the Old and New Testaments.⁵¹

This exegetical tradition was familiar to Latin writers, including Jerome, Augustine, Cassian, Cassiodorus, Gregory the Great and Bede. Pope Gregory used the extended image in a synodical letter on Christian priesthood and in the *Regulae Pastoralis*, where he speaks of teachers (*rectores*) and interpreters of the Scriptures who need to withdraw to the Tabernacle and meditate on the divine law in order to expound God’s commandments to others in their words and deeds. Gregory explained the symbolic meaning of the breastplate and one or two other key examples of the vestments of the high priest with which Christian teachers should be spiritually clothed: ‘they consult the Lord, as it were, before the Ark’; they appear ‘in the vesture of the high priest within the Holy of Holies’.⁵² By meditating on the sacred word and living it in their [381] lives, they raise the Ark

47 M. Borret (trans.), *Origène. Homélies sur l’Exode*, Sources Chrétiennes (SC) 321 (Paris 1985), *Hom.* 9.4, 300; Cassian, *Conlationes* 14: E. Pichery (ed. and trans.), *Jean Cassien, Conférences*, SC 54 (Paris 1958) 10.

48 Gregory, *Homiliae in Ezechielem*, 6.2; Bede, *De tabernaculo* 1,13: A. G. Holder (trans.), *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool 1994) 11.

49 Exodus 38; 39:1–31; 40:12–15.

50 The words ‘Holy to the Lord’ were inscribed on the gold plate of the high priest’s head-dress (Exodus 28:36).

51 Origen, *Hom.* 9, 300–04; further, O’Reilly, ‘The library of Scripture’, 14–21.

52 *Ep* 1.24, cf. *Ep* 8.29, John R. C. Martyn (trans.), *The letters of Gregory the Great* (Toronto 2004) I, 135–42; and II, 524. *Regulae Pastoralis* 2. 3, 5, 7: Bruno Judic, *Grégoire le Grand, Règle pastorale* SC 381–82, 2 vols. (Paris 1992), I. 180–86, 200, 224; Henry Davis (trans.), *St Gregory the Great, Pastoral Care*, Ancient Christian Writers (ACW) 11 (New York 1950) 46–47, 49–51, 57, 71; cf. *Moralia* 23.19.

of the Scriptures 'to bring holy Church through preaching to untutored minds', in accordance with the admonitions of the first Pastor of the Church.⁵³

In Epistle 53 Jerome described the priestly sacrifices, laws and Aaron's vestments in Leviticus as symbols of heavenly things (*caelestia sacramenta*); this interpretation is inscribed in the circle at the very centre of the cross-shaped Pentateuch diagram in the Codex Amiatinus. Jerome, following Origen, expounded the eight high-priestly vestments in Epistle 64, which Bede drew on in his sustained commentary on the Exodus account of the Tabernacle, c. 721–25.⁵⁴ Bede presented Aaron, the first High Priest, as a figure of Christ the true High Priest, who uniquely offered the sacrifice of himself for his people.⁵⁵ Aaron's sons who were anointed with him into the priesthood prefigure the apostles and all those who, with a variety of charisms, follow in the unity of apostolic faith and action; they meditate on the divine law with zeal and love, offer the sacrifice of penitence and good works and instruct the faithful through their example. Just as the priests kept fire perpetually burning on the altar of sacrifice (Leviticus 6:12–13), as can be seen in the Amiatinus diagram of the Tabernacle (Figure 1.1), so the hearts of Christian teachers are offered in sacrifice and daily burn with the flame of love; they kindle this fire in others by instructing them in the two testaments and in the love of God and neighbour.⁵⁶ Bede's interpretation of the breastplate, head-dress and other high priestly garments provides in particular a spiritual portrait of 'those chosen for leadership of the Lord's flock, having received the priesthood and the spiritual office of teaching'. The twelve stones on the breastplate indicate those who follow in the unity of apostolic faith and charity; the diversity of the stones represents all the Fathers united by a common faith, charity and hope of the heavenly life.⁵⁷

The figure in the frontispiece of the Codex Amiatinus wears some of the vestments of the high priest, notably the head-dress and breastplate. He is [382] seated with scribal tools, however, before a book-cupboard whose open doors draw the gaze of the viewer. It is an *armarium* of the type seen in some antique representations of the Torah shrine containing the scrolls of the law, but here patterned

53 *Règle pastorale* 1.254, Davis (trans.), *Pastoral Care*, 88. For Gregory's integration of the ideal of the teacher or *rector* with that of the holy man, through whom God speaks, see Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in imperfection* (Berkeley 1988) 70–74.

54 Exodus 24:12–30:21. Jerome, *Ad Fabiolam*, Ep. 64: Labourt (ed.), *Lettres* 3. 117–40. For Bede's extended spiritual interpretation of the priesthood and vestments of Aaron (Exodus 28:1–29:9), see Arthur Holder (tr.), *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool 1994), xiii–xxi, 109–44.

55 Bede also emphasises the difference between them by referring to Christ as the eternal great high priest 'according to the order of Melchisedech' (Hebrews 7:17, quoting Psalms 109:4); D. Hurst (ed.), *De tabernaculo* CCSL 119A (Turnhout 1969) 2.70–71, II. 1131–50, 3.96, II. 143–49, 3.130, II. 1442–50; Holder (trans.), *Tabernacle*, 79, 110, 144 and n. 2, 151; see Hebrews 4:14–5:10, 7:1–3, 11–27, 8:1–5, 9: 6–28, 10:11–21.

56 Bede here broadly follows the tradition of Origen and Gregory. *De tabernaculo* 2.76–83; 3.104, II. 443–60, Holder (trans.), *Tabernacle*, 120; cf. *In Ezram et Neemiam* 1.264.

57 *De tabernaculo*, 3.114, II. 841–46, Holder (trans.), *Tabernacle*, 132; 118–25, 130–33.

with tiny crosses and surmounted by a Late Antique image of the exalted cross, signifying the glorified Christ.⁵⁸ The *armarium* is an Ark containing both the Old Testament and the New, a whole library of Scripture whose constituent books are bound in nine volumes, their titles on the spines offering a further listing of all the biblical books. The cover of each of the codices, from the Old Testament as well as the New, is marked with a Christological sign – the cross, the *chi* or the lozenge. So interpreted, the picture before our eyes (whatever the context of the antique image or images from which it may have been derived) functions as an appropriate frontispiece to the Codex Amiatinus, itself a complete library of the Scriptures in which Christ, the divine word, is revealed.

The inscription: Ezra, Jerome and the *Hebraica veritas*

The foregoing interpretation of the image argues that it is not a literal portrait of an Old Testament *pontifex*, or the historical or apocryphal figure of Ezra, yet the text above the frame refers to Ezra:

*Codicibus sacris hostili clade perustis
Esdra Deo fervens hoc reparavit opus.*⁵⁹

This inscription has led to the frequent identification of the scribal figure as Ezra. In Late Antique and Insular art, however, a *titulus* does not always offer a caption describing the subject matter depicted. As in the rhetorical tradition of *ekphrasis*, a *titulus* can prompt meditation on the meaning of the image, through paradox or wordplay, or by the evocation of texts and images in the viewer’s memory.⁶⁰ If this inscription functioned in such a way, what associations might its reference to Ezra have brought to a contemporary understanding of the image of the spiritually vested scribe seated before the *armarium*? [384]

In the canonical book of Ezra and Nehemiah (included in the Codex Amiatinus), the return from Babylonian exile is like a second Exodus and renews the Covenant. Ezra’s proclamation of the Mosaic Law to the penitent people, the feast of tabernacles commemorating their forefathers’ encampments on the journey through the desert to the promised land, the rebuilding of the ruined Temple in

58 Elisheva Revel-Neher, ‘L’Alliance et la Promesse: le symbolisme d’Eretz-Israël dans l’iconographie juive du moyen âge’, *Jewish Art* 12–13 (1986–87) 135–46, fig.3, for two examples on glass from fourth-century Rome, depicting the Torah shrine as an *armarium* with open doors; one, with triangular pediment and containing nine scrolls, has two flanking peacocks, a motif seen in the pediment of the Amiatinus *armarium*.

59 ‘The sacred books having been burned by enemy destruction, Ezra, fervent for God, restored this work’.

60 Ruth Webb, ‘Ekphrasis ancient and modern: invention of a genre’, *Word and Image* 15 (1999), 7–18; Liz James and Ruth Webb, ‘“To understand ultimate things and enter secret places”: ekphrasis and art in Byzantium’, *Art History* 14 (1991), 1–17.

that land and the cleansing of the priesthood, recall the original giving of the Law to Moses, the construction of the Tabernacle and the institution of the Aaronite priesthood according to divine command. Ezra is described as a priest (but not the high priest) in the line of Aaron.⁶¹ He is also ‘a swift scribe in the law of Moses’, ‘the most learned scribe of the law of God’ (1 Ezra 7:1–6, 12), but the details of his scribal work are not recounted in Scripture.

In patristic tradition however, as summarized by Isidore, Ezra restored not only the Law of Moses after it had been burned by the Babylonians, but the whole library of the Hebrew Scriptures, which he ordered into twenty-two books.⁶² Bede’s commentary on the biblical book further pictured Ezra as not simply transcribing with a new script, but *editing* the material which had survived the Babylonian fire.⁶³ The description, briefly sketched by Bede in an earlier work, reflects his interest in the literal text of Scripture and critical awareness of evidence of Ezra’s editorial work in the Old Testament.⁶⁴ Bede’s experience of the great editorial and scribal undertaking in the scriptorium of his own community may well have informed his account.⁶⁵

Some Fathers had linked Ezra’s work on the Hebrew Scriptures with the tradition of its later inspired translation into Greek. Through the Greek Septuagint the Hebrew Scriptures became available to Gentiles too, in providential preparation for the Incarnation and the formation of the new chosen people. Augustine held the authority of the Septuagint (and the Itala *vetus latina* derived from it) to be supreme but was aware of ‘the infinite variety of [385] Latin translators’.⁶⁶ In the preface to his translation of the Pentateuch, Jerome exposed the errors of Latin copyists and differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew Scriptures used by Christ and the apostles.⁶⁷ In the Vulgate’s *Prologus Galeatus*, also included in the Codex Amiatinus, Jerome listed the twenty-two books of the Hebrew canon and denied accusations that his Latin translation from the Hebrew was intended to rival the Septuagint; it was, he said, but a humble offering for the construction

61 See Scott DeGregorio (trans.), *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool 2006), Introduction, xxxiii–xxxv and 113, n. 7, and 231–33 for Bede’s use of the term *pontifex*.

62 Isidore, *Etymologiae* 6, 3, 2.

63 For patristic, apocryphal and Insular references to Ezra, and his role in Bede’s *In Ezram et Neemiam*, see O’Reilly, ‘The library of Scripture’ 18–30, 33. DeGregorio (trans.), *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah*, xxxvi–xlii, notes Bede’s early outline of the book of Ezra and his intention of examining it, recorded in his commentary on Genesis, and dates the eventual commentary *In Ezram et Neemiam* to the late 720s.

64 Bede, *In Regum librum XXX Quaestiones*: W. Trent Foley and Arthur Holder (trans.), *Bede: a biblical miscellany* (Liverpool 1999) 87; dated c. 715 by Meyvaert, ‘Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus’, 833.

65 For Bede’s probable involvement in the production of the Codex Amiatinus, see Richard Marsden, ‘*Manus Bedae*: Bede’s contribution to Ceolfrith’s bibles’, *Anglo-Saxon Eng* 27 (1998), 65–85.

66 *De Doctrina Christiana* 2.34, 53–56: R.P.H. Green (ed.), *Augustine. De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford 1995) 73, 81, 83; see Caroline White, *The correspondence (394–419) between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo* (Lampeter 1990) 35–42, on the authority of the Septuagint.

67 *Biblia sacra*, 3–4; Stefan Rebenich (trans.), *Jerome* (London 2002) 101–04.

and protection of the Tabernacle (cf. Exodus 25:3–8), meaning the building up and defence of the Church.⁶⁸ Like Augustine, Jerome’s reputation as biblical scholar was associated with his role as a defender of orthodoxy.⁶⁹ The *vetus latina* remained important because of its inspired origins and its use in patristic literature and the liturgy, but Jerome’s translation came to be regarded as part of the continuing providential process of the dissemination of God’s word from the Hebrews to the Greeks and the Latins.

Isidore (d. 636) listed all the books of the Old and New Testaments and their inspired authors who, ‘for our education drew up in writing both precepts for living and the pattern of belief’. He outlined how the scribe Ezra, divinely inspired, restored the library of the Old Testament after the burning of the Law, how it was translated from Hebrew to Greek by the seventy translators under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and by various others, and how ‘the priest Jerome, skilled in three languages, translated the same Scriptures from Hebrew into Latin’, his version being generally preferred, because of the greater accuracy of its renderings, and the clarity of its words.⁷⁰ In the Codex Amiatinus some lines from Isidore, praising Jerome as a translator ‘most learned in diverse languages’, are written across the bottom of the purple page, fol. 3/IVv, which lists the biblical books contained in the Amiatinus in Jerome’s translation, but in the order of the old translation: ‘The whole world proclaims you. Our library too will reveal you by means of your books’, with the additional adapted line, ‘through which you create new offerings out of ancient treasures’. Isidore’s opening words had been quoted [386] by Bede in his letter to Plegwin, c. 708, where, defending the orthodoxy of his biblical chronology, he asserted the authority of the *Hebraica veritas*, ‘recorded by Origen, published by Jerome, praised by Augustine, confirmed by Josephus’.⁷¹ Bede cited Augustine’s agreement with Jerome’s view that the ‘genuine and ancient translation’ of the Septuagint had in places been corrupted by copyists, and he quoted from one of Jerome’s Vulgate prefaces, that argue his translation was not an innovation but a return to the source.⁷²

The character of the Codex Amiatinus as containing ‘the Hebrew truth’ is emphasised by its inclusion of Jerome’s prefaces, his Hebrew titles for some of the Old Testament books, his *Psalterium iuxta hebreos*, rather than the Gallican

68 *Biblia sacra*, 364–66.

69 For Jerome’s refutation of heresy and the fraudulent use of Scripture, see Benoît Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme et l’hérésie* (Paris 1999) 308–17, 330–41. In the Easter controversy, the authority of Jerome was invoked by Columbanus, *Ep. 1* to Gregory the Great: Walker (ed.), *Columbani Opera*, 9, ll. 18–21; and Cummián, *De Controversia Paschali* 76, ll. 137–41 and n. 137.

70 *Etymologiae* 6.4, 5; *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, CCL 113, 1, 12–13. Aldhelm praised Jerome, *De Virginitate*, 29; for Adomnán’s use of the Vulgate, see T. O’Loughlin, ‘The Latin version of the Scriptures in use on Iona in the late seventh century: the evidence from Adomnán’s *De locis sanctis*’, *Peritia* 8 (1994), 18–26.

71 Isidore, *Versus in Bibliotheca* 7.1–2; Wallis (trans.), *Bede: The reckoning of time*, Appendix 3, 411, 414.

72 *In libros Paralipomenon Praefatio*, *Biblia sacra*, 546.

psalter, and by the diagrams of the Pentateuch and the Tabernacle.⁷³ Furthermore, the frontispiece *titulus*, ‘The sacred books having been burned by enemy destruction, Ezra, fervent for God, restored this work’, makes the point that ‘this work’ is to be found in this volume, which contains Jerome’s translation of the *Hebraica veritas* established by Ezra. It may be that for those who produced this volume, Jerome was particularly present in the symbolic image of the venerable Christian scribe in high-priestly garments before the Ark of the Scriptures.

Although Ezra’s restoration of the sacred texts historically referred to the Hebrew Scriptures alone, the Codex Amiatinus picture shows the scribe before an *armarium* containing a complete Bible and prefaces a pandect, itself an *armarium scripturarum*, whose opening quire repeatedly illustrates the unity of the Old and New Testaments. Again, patristic tradition explains how the name of Ezra could be associated with an image showing the whole of Scripture. Firstly, Jerome’s Epistle 53 briefly noted that in the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra prefigures both Christ and his Church. Bede was to expand Jerome’s interpretation in his own commentary.⁷⁴ Ezra restored the Law of Moses that the fire had destroyed, not only by editing and copying its literal text, but also by renewing it. He renewed it by preparing his heart (1 Ezra 7:10), meditating on the law of the Lord (Psalms 1:2), seeking to obey the divine will in word and deed, and by teaching its underlying meaning to others. Spiritually interpreted, Ezra is a figure of Christ, who wrote the law given to Moses and renewed it at the Incarnation. Unlike the pharisees who observed only its literal letter, Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law (Matthew 5:17) and drew out the spiritual mysteries concealed beneath the veil of the outer [387] letter, revealing the gospel within the law and showing the apostles his presence in the books of the Old Testament.⁷⁵

Secondly, like Origen and Jerome, Bede also interpreted Ezra as ‘the helper’. Ezra is the inspired editor and copyist of the law of God, but also its authoritative priestly interpreter and teacher. Christ is *pontifex secundum ordinem Melchisedech* and Ezra, who renewed his people and the Jewish priesthood itself, *pontificali auctoritate*, is a figure of all the leaders and *doctores* of the church who share in Christ’s eternal priesthood and continue to prepare themselves spiritually to expound the divine word for others, bringing them to deeper inner conversion.⁷⁶ The Ezra inscription over the frontispiece of the Codex Amiatinus may therefore be read as an epigraph to the image of the haloed Christian scribe who

73 Marsden, *The text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, 76–201 and 141–42 for the Hebrew psalter.

74 In *Ezra et Neemiam*, Prologue, 237.

75 In a mystical sense, Christ renewed or rewrote the law by providing a human nature for his divinity at the Incarnation: In *Ezra et Neemiam*, 2.311–12, 318, 336–67; cf. 1. 245–46.

76 In *Ezra et Neemiam*, 2.310. As the first high priest, Aaron prefigured Christ, but Christ superseded the historical Aaronite priesthood at the Incarnation; the eternal nature of Christ’s high priesthood was figured in Melchisedech. See note 55.

is spiritually vested and has entered the sanctuary of Scripture to seek the divine Word and expound it.

The Tabernacle and the building up of the Church

The prefatory quire of the Codex Amiatinus was dominated by the diagram of the Tabernacle, spanning a double opening, visualised from two perspectives and surpassing in magnificence surviving Byzantine examples which suggest the kind of antique traditions from which it derives (Figure 1.1).⁷⁷ It realistically depicts the Tabernacle and sacred vessels described in Exodus and names the twelve tribes camped around its four sides (Numbers 3). The layout is incorporated in the New Testament vision of the heavenly sanctuary of the New Jerusalem, which is inscribed on its four cardinal sides with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the universal Church (Revelation 21:12–14). In the *Amiatinus* diagram the tiny sign of the cross at the entrance to the Tabernacle provides the key to the diagram’s spiritual interpretation of the literal text of the Old Testament account.⁷⁸ The Greek cardinal directions, inscribed in gold around the sanctuary, contain an arcane allusion to the gospel comparison of the Resurrection of Christ’s body with the building up of the Temple, which ‘took forty-six years’ (John 2:18–21), seen by exegetes as referring to the restoration of the Temple [388] in the time of Ezra. The initial letters of the four directions form a cosmic tetragrammaton whose numerical equivalent is forty-six; this well-known cryptogram alluding to the body of Christ, and thereby to the building up and heavenly perfecting of the whole Church, was much used by Augustine and Bede.⁷⁹

The diagram can be read as simultaneously referring to the Tabernacle and the Temple, the two historical earthly sanctuaries of the Old Covenant made at different times, but both according to the divine pattern.⁸⁰ In the New Testament and in patristic exegesis the Temple is a figure of Christ and, like the Tabernacle, can also refer to

77 Bianca Kühnel, ‘Jewish symbolism of the Temple and Tabernacle and Christian symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the heavenly Tabernacle’, *Jewish Art* 12–13 (1986–87), 147–68.

78 Elisabeth Revel-Neher, ‘Du Codex Amiatinus et ses rapports avec les plans du tabernacle dans l’art juif et dans l’art byzantin’, *J of Jewish Art* 9 (1982), 6–17:16–17.

79 W. Berschin, ‘*Opus deliberatum ac perfectum*: why did the Venerable Bede write a second Prose Life of St Cuthbert?’, in G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St Cuthbert, his cult and his community* (Woodbridge 1989) 95–102, on Augustine and the tetragrammaton; for its particular application in the Amiatinus diagram and in Bede’s commentary on Ezra, see O’Reilly, ‘The library of Scripture’, 30–34.

80 On the two sanctuaries as both symbolising the one spiritual house of God from Creation to the end of the world, on earth and in heaven, but the Tabernacle especially representing the time of the ancient people of God, the Temple representing the church, or the Tabernacle referring especially to the pilgrim church on earth, the Temple to the church in the heavenly promised land, see Bede, *De tabernaculo* 2.42–43; *De templo* 1.148; *Homilia* 2.25. The *Amiatinus* diagram shows liturgical furnishings common to both earthly sanctuaries; the names of Moses and Aaron are inscribed in the Tabernacle’s court, but the water laver is shown in the position it had in the court of the Temple.

his body the Church and its individual members, and to the heavenly sanctuary of the New Jerusalem.⁸¹ The *Amiatinus* diagram is a visual paradigm of the multi-layered spiritual interpretation of Scripture, which reveals the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, the unity of providential history, and the one house of God.

The particular task of the priestly scribe who enters the sanctuary of Scripture, spiritually purified and vested, is to seek the meaning of the divine word in order to proclaim the work of redemption and make known the divine will concerning the continuing process of building up the Tabernacle. The Codex Amiatinus embodies the role of biblical learning, interpretation and teaching in the church and implicitly suggests that the makers of the book were sharing with its recipient in the time-honoured sacred task. Ceolfrith's pandect was itself an offering for the building up of the earthly Tabernacle in the likeness of the heavenly sanctuary. His pupil Bede later wrote major commentaries on the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament accounts of the construction of the Tabernacle and the building and rebuilding of the Temple, not only for the edification of monastic brethren but for the wider renewal of the contemporary Church and its leadership.⁸² [389]

Entrusted to the charge of Benedict Biscop and then of Ceolfrith for his education from the age of seven, c. 680, Bede had applied himself 'entirely to the study of the Scriptures' amid the discipline of the rule and the daily office. Benedict Biscop had ordered that the fine library of books 'necessary for the instruction of the church', which he had brought back from Rome between c. 653 and c. 685, should be carefully preserved intact. Ceolfrith 'doubled the number of books in both monasteries with an ardour equal to that which Benedict had shown in founding them'.⁸³ Ceolfrith's work was critical to the formation of the Latin Bible culture in which the Codex Amiatinus was produced. Bede's catalogue of his writings from about 701, including aids to the study of the language and literal text of Scripture and interpretative works in various genres, which eventually spanned the whole range of Scripture and creatively filled gaps in the patristic tradition, suggests a programme of Christian learning.⁸⁴ The provision of study aids and exegesis, as well as translation, had been an integral part of biblical learning in Late Antiquity, as is evident in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, in Jerome's production of 'a kind of hypertextual edition' of the Scriptures for Latin readers and in Cassiodorus's systematic creation of a monastic library.⁸⁵

81 The exegetical tradition is discussed in the 'Introduction' to Connolly (trans.), *Bede: On the Temple*, xvii–lv.

82 Alan Thacker, 'Bede's ideal of reform', in P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (eds.), *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford 1983) 130–53; Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St Benedict, and social class* (Jarrow 1976) 13, 19–22; O'Reilly, 'Introduction' to Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, xxviii–li; Scott DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian church', *Speculum* 79 (2004), 1–25.

83 *Historia abbatum* 11, 375; 15, 379; *Age of Bede*, 198, 203.

84 *HE* 5.24.

85 Mark Vessey, 'Jerome and Rufinus' in F. Young, L. Ayres and A. Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge history of early Christian literature* (Cambridge 2004) 318–27, 321.

The ecclesial context of biblical interpretation

The Codex Amiatinus was, quite remarkably, one of three great pandects of the new translation produced during Ceolfrith's abbacy. The two sister pandects were also in Roman uncial script but for in-house use, 'so that all who wished to read a chapter of either Testament could quickly find what they wanted'.⁸⁶ There is no suggestion they replaced the ancient pandect of the *uetus translatio*. The interpretation of Scripture requires that a passage be read in the context of the whole, ideally through consultation of variant versions and translations in manuscripts uncorrupted by scribal error. The ultimate measure of the interpretation of Scripture lies in its accord with the living consensus of the Church and its capacity to build up the love of God [390] and neighbour.⁸⁷ The placing of two of Ceolfrith's Bibles in the monastic churches of St Peter and St Paul would have recalled the churches' connection with the shrine of St Peter at Rome, where the third codex was to be located, but also their relationship with each other as one monastery in two places, bound by one spirit of peace and harmony, as Benedict Biscop had desired at Jarrow's foundation under Ceolfrith. Bede further described Wearmouth and Jarrow through the Pauline image of the head and the body and compared the brotherly love which should unite their two churches of St Peter and St Paul with the fraternal concord which had bound the two chief apostles.⁸⁸

The diagrams in the Codex Amiatinus presuppose that the Scriptures are read in an ecclesial context. Repeatedly picturing a complete *sacra bibliotheca*, they show the harmony of the whole of divinely inspired Scripture and its continuing providential transmission through changing times and a diversity of texts, translations and commentators, but all within the unity of the one faith. There is only one reference to the papacy. The diagram showing the division of the biblical books in the Septuagint, the ordering used in the Vulgate Codex Amiatinus, is associated by inscription with *sanctus Hilar[i]us romanae urbis antistes* and Epiphanius and not with *sanctus Hilarius Pictaviensis urbis antistes*, Rufinus, Epiphanius and the councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, as in Cassiodorus's *Institutiones* (and probably in the Codex Grandior).⁸⁹ Ian Wood has suggested the substitution of Hilary, bishop of Rome for Hilary, bishop of Poitiers was an attempt by Wearmouth-Jarrow to present the Amiatinus, quite fallaciously, 'as a papally organised text' to emphasise the importance of Rome.⁹⁰

86 *Historia Abbatum*, 15.379; *Vita Ceolfridi*, 20. 395.

87 Augustine. *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1.86–88; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian doctrines* (5th edn, London and New York 1977) 29–51; on the rule of faith as 'the hermeneutical key to interpreting Scripture' see Vincent Twomey, 'St Athanasius: *De Synodis* and the sense of Scripture', in T. Finan and V. Twomey (eds.), *Scriptural interpretation in the Fathers* (Dublin 1995) 85–118, 117.

88 *Historia Abbatum*, 7. 370. Ian Wood, *The most holy Abbot Ceolfrid* (Jarrow 1995) 10–12, suggests problems of disharmony and external threat may underlie the assertions of unity.

89 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', 841–44.

90 Wood, *Abbot Ceolfrid*, 13; Celia Chazelle links the page with the frontispiece, which she identifies as a non-canonical depiction of Ezra as high priest, prefiguring 'not only Christ but Christ's earthly

It may, rather, have served to emphasise the role of the papacy as the ancient defender of the faith and consensus of the universal Church. The *Liber pontificalis* records the importance of Hilarus, Pope Leo the Great's deacon and successor, in issuing letters on the catholic and apostolic faith, confirming the councils of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon and the *Tome* of [391] Leo.⁹¹ The interpretation of Scripture had been fundamental to the work of the councils and to Leo's articulation of orthodox belief in the divine and human natures of Christ in one person, which had been accepted at Chalcedon in 451 as in accordance with Peter's inspired confession of faith.⁹² As the distance between Constantinople and the West widened, the general council of Chalcedon and Leo's *Tome* had become increasingly important symbols of orthodoxy in the West, particularly in the pontificate of Gregory the Great.⁹³

The founders of Wearmouth-Jarrow were aware of these issues through contacts at the highest level. Theodore of Canterbury had probably been involved in preparations for the Lateran Council of 649 and Benedict Biscop was in Rome shortly afterwards. On a later visit Benedict had been required by Pope Vitalian to escort Theodore, newly consecrated as archbishop of Canterbury, from Rome to Britain in 668–69 and Benedict had then remained in Canterbury for two years in charge of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul.⁹⁴ On the occasion Ceolfrith brought back the pandect of the *vetus translatio* from Rome, he and Benedict Biscop had escorted John, the archcantor of St Peter's, Rome, whom Pope Agatho had authorised to teach chant at St Peter's, Wearmouth.⁹⁵ John also acted as papal representative at the synod of Hatfield in 679. It was one of the provincial councils preparatory to Agatho's synod in Rome in 680, which drew up a crucial testimony of western orthodoxy and unity for the papal delegates to deliver at the council of Constantinople. This council, 680–81, was arranged to bring about peace after decades of the Monothelete controversy between Rome and Constantinople, though the papacy continued to have cause to identify publicly with Chalcedon and Leo in the defence of orthodox belief.⁹⁶

representative, Pope Hilarus, the supposed creator (with Epiphanius) of the system of organising the Old and New Testaments employed in Amiatinus'; the Old Testament *pontifex* offers Gregory II 'a mirror of the papacy's responsibilities'; 'Ceolfrid's gift to St Peter', 147–57.

91 As noted by Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus and the Codex Amiatinus', 843–44.

92 Norman P. Tanner (ed. and trans.), *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, 2 vols. (London and Georgetown 1990) I, 83–87; 80, 85.

93 Gregory said he venerated the first four councils, just as he venerated the four books of the Holy Gospel, because in the councils 'the structure of the holy faith rises up as if built on a square stone and whoever does not uphold their solidity [. . .] lies outside the building', *Ep.* 1.24, synodical letter, 591: John C. Martyn (trans.), *The letters of Gregory the Great*, 3 vols. (Toronto 2004) I, 146.

94 *Historia Abbatum* 3; *HE* 4.1. T.X. Noble, 'Rome in the seventh century', in M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: commemorative studies on his life and influence* (Cambridge 1995) 68–87; 87.

95 *Historia Abbatum*, 6; *HE* 4.17, 18.

96 For the continuing dispute between Rome and Constantinople over the next thirty years, and Insular knowledge of it, see Judith Herrin, *The formation of Christendom* (London 1987) 217–19, 252–90; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the 'Dream of the Rood' tradition* (London 2005) 225–29, 255–57.

In a letter read at the council of Constantinople, Agatho referred to the knowledge of the Scriptures which had been taken to Rome’s far distant [392] provinces by his predecessors, obedient to Peter’s charge. He set out orthodox belief in the Trinity and in the two natures and wills of Christ, using the language of Chalcedon, Pope Leo and the Lateran Council, but described his role as preserving, without addition or subtraction, the same doctrine of the holy Scriptures taught by the Holy Spirit through the princes of the apostles and canonically defined by apostolic pontiffs, the universal councils and the Fathers of the undivided Church.⁹⁷

Archbishop Theodore had received the signed agreement of English bishops and teachers in 672/73 to decrees ‘laid down by the fathers in ancient times’ and conducive to the unity and peace of the Church, of which the first was the common celebration of the canonical Easter.⁹⁸ In 679 Theodore summoned the bishops of the island of Britain and many learned *doctores* to the council of Hatfield to affirm their orthodox belief. Following the custom of the general councils, imitated at the Lateran Council of 649, their testimony took place ‘in the presence of the holy gospels’, which represented the faith delivered by Christ to the disciples and handed down through the creed, the universal councils and ‘the whole body of the accredited doctors of the catholic church’.⁹⁹ The council at Hatfield recognised the decrees of all five general councils of the church (325–553), subscribed to a Trinitarian confession of faith and acknowledged the Lateran Council held in Rome by Pope Martin I.¹⁰⁰

The Lateran *acta* had condemned the heresy of Monotheletism by affirming and further clarifying orthodox belief in the divine and human natures of Christ, united in one person, as it had been expressed by Pope Leo and the council of Chalcedon in 451. John the archcantor had brought the *acta* of the Lateran council from Rome.¹⁰¹ A copy was made and kept in the monastery at Wearmouth and a copy of the Hatfield proceedings was made for John to take back to the pope. It would have presented a comprehensive statement of the membership of the *ecclesia Anglorum* within the universal Church, and of the continuity of the apostolic faith handed on to diverse peoples through changing times and an evolving understanding of revelation. [393]

97 Letter to the Emperor, *PL* 87, 1161; cf. 1215, H. Percival (trans.), *The seven ecumenical councils of the undivided Church*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, 14 (Oxford and New York 1900; repr. Grand Rapids 1979) 328–41.

98 *HE* 4.5.

99 Bede cites from Theodore’s record of the proceedings of the Synod of Hertford, *HE* 4.17. Christopher Walter, *L’iconographie des conciles dans la tradition Byzantine* (Paris 1970) 26, nn. 143–44, 159–63.

100 *HE* 4.17. M. Hurley, ‘Born incorruptibly: the third canon of the Lateran Council AD 649’, *Heythrop J* 2 (1961), 216–36.

101 David Ganz, ‘Roman mss in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Roma fra Oriente e Occidente, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo* XLIX.1 (2002) 607–47, 618–19.

These major events coincided with the earliest years of Wearmouth, founded c. 673, and immediately preceded the foundation of Jarrow under Ceolfrith in 681.¹⁰² The events formed part of the background to the development of the monastic library during his rule of both houses (688–716) and the production of the three pandects. Ceolfrith's dedication of the Codex Amiatinus affirmed, at a time of continuing tensions between Rome and Constantinople, long-established ties of common faith between the farthest boundaries of the *Angli* and St Peter, *caput ecclesiae*.

Romanitas

William Diebold has rightly noted that ideological reasons underlie the *Amiatinus*'s stylistic differences from Insular gospel books, but the nature of Wearmouth-Jarrow's ideology, as discussed here, may qualify the view that 'The extreme Romanness of the Codex Amiatinus is a sign of Wearmouth-Jarrow's desire to ally itself forcefully and publicly with the victors at Whitby'.¹⁰³ More than fifty years after the synod of Whitby, Iona finally accepted the canonical usages in the matter of Easter and the form of the tonsure in 716, the year in which Ceolfrith set out for Rome with the *Amiatinus*.¹⁰⁴ To the papacy and Insular *Romani* such as Cumman and Wilfrid, Columban Easter practice was particularist and open to suspicions of Judaism, schism or heresy, but Bede was retrospectively to defend Aidan's motivation and orthodoxy of belief and presented the Columban monks as models of pastoral care who had shared in the apostolic task of converting the *Angli*.¹⁰⁵

In a letter to the Pictish king Nechtan, c. 710, Ceolfrith had expounded the canonical Easter.¹⁰⁶ He was aware there had been diversity of practice among the apostles concerning the tonsure and that Adomnán of Iona and many other monks who did not wear the Petrine tonsure were holy men who upheld catholic unity by their faith and good works, yet he argued this tonsure was most worthy of being imitated. As the whole Church wears the invisible baptismal sign of the redeeming Cross, so the tonsure is a visible sign of the still stricter way of the Cross followed in monastic and priestly discipleship; because it recalls Christ's crown of thorns and anticipates the crown of life, it was worn by him 'to whose confession [of faith] the Lord replied, Thou [394] art Peter and on this rock I will build my church [. . .] (Matthew 16:18–19)'. Ceolfrith said he had therefore advised Adomnán, who longed to follow Peter, 'It would be a sign that you agree

102 Bede emphasises king Ecgriþ's sympathy with Benedict's enterprise and Aldfrith's ready confirmation of the privileges of protection granted the monastery by Pope Sergius, *Historia Abbatum* 4, 7, 15. On the monastery's royal connections, see Wood, *Abbot Ceolfrid*, 2–6.

103 William Diebold, *Word and image. An introduction to medieval art* (Boulder CO 2000) 35–6.

104 *HE* 5. 21, 22.

105 *HE* 3.4, 17, 25.

106 *HE* 5.21.

in your inmost heart with all that Peter stands for if you followed his known ways in your outward appearance’.¹⁰⁷

Through the sign of the studied *romanitas* of its buildings and art, liturgy and relics, library and script, the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow made Petrine Rome present at the ends of the earth; by implication the universal Church of Christ was being built up in that place. The monastic founders thereby symbolically separated their community from local earthly society and directed it towards the heavenly home represented by Rome. Bede described Benedict Biscop’s first journey to the tombs of the apostles as that of a pilgrim leaving country, home and family for Christ and the gospel. He records the urgency with which Benedict returned to Rome to learn and establish the monastic and canonical practices regularising the life of alienation from the world.¹⁰⁸ The books, images, chant and other spiritual treasures Benedict and Ceolfrith brought back from Rome supplied their monks with ‘the saving knowledge’ necessary for the cloistered life, and the papal privileges they secured protected the monastery from external interference which might threaten its purity.¹⁰⁹ Malcolm Parkes observed that the basis of the scribal discipline which imitated Roman uncial script with such extraordinary consistency was monastic discipline itself. He argued that Wearmouth-Jarrow’s early avoidance of Insular scripts and Ceolfrith’s specific choice of uncial script characteristic of the time of Gregory the Great for his three pandects, was ‘part of a programme to maintain the distinctly Roman tradition of the house within the surrounding culture’.¹¹⁰

The scale and grandeur of the Amiatinus’s pandect format, its monumental Roman script and antique art forms, assert the abiding *auctoritas* and harmony of the divine word, providentially revealed through time and diversely transmitted within the unity of the apostolic faith of the universal Church safeguarded by Rome. The contents – the biblical text, prologues and exegetical images – are in accord with the book’s outward appearance and demonstrate that the fullness of the faith had indeed been received at the ends of earth and was being handed on. The pandect which Ceolfrith took on his final pilgrimage to St Peter offered an expansive vision of what *romanitas* meant in the monastic culture of Wearmouth-Jarrow. [395]

107 HE 5.21. Bede described Adomnán as *vir bonus et sapiens* (most learned in the Scriptures, most devoted to unity and peace), HE 5.15.

108 *Historia Abbatum* 1, 4, 5, 7.

109 Hom.1.13, *Homiliae Evangelii*, 93, ll. 185–90, *Historia Abbatum*, 1, 6, 9.

110 Parkes, *Scriptorium at Wearmouth-Jarrow*, 21–22; Ganz, ‘Roman manuscripts in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England’, 641–43.



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The Book of Kells



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THE BOOK OF KELLS, FOLIO 114R

A mystery revealed yet concealed

For George Every

Fol. 114r in the Book of Kells (Plate 5.1) is usually identified as the Arrest of Christ and the gesture of His captors in grasping His arms has been seen as ‘naively illustrating the phrase *manum inicere* (to lay hands on)’ (Nordenfalk 1977, 124). Recent scholars, however, have suggested that the iconography of the Arrest and the liturgical and exegetical associations of its accompanying texts in Kells allude to other themes as well, notably the Passion and the Eucharist (Lewis 1980, 155; Henderson, G 1987, 162–63) and in a detailed study of the image’s possible liturgical context, Farr (1989) has proposed an alternative identification.

Fol. 114r is set in the gospel text in its original position: the picture’s inscription *Et ymno dicto exierunt in montem oliveti* (Matthew 26:30) is a continuation of the text from the facing page and ‘was written after the drawing of the design of the page but before the application of all the pigment’ (Meehan 1990, 255). The ornate framing and decoration of the opening words of the next verse, *Tunc dicit illis ihs omnes vos scan[dalum]*, which completely occupies fol. 114v, contrasts markedly with the treatment of Matthew 26:50 describing the arrest of Christ some five pages after the picture. The sentence ‘Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him’ begins inconspicuously on the bottom line of fol. 116v and continues, without decoration, on the top line of folio 117r.

Manuscript parallels

Another exceedingly rare survival of an early medieval gospel book with pictures in the body of the text, the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels, a Carolingian Breton book, now in the FitzWilliam Museum, Cambridge MS 45–1980, illustrates the Betrayal and Arrest of Christ at the appropriate point in St Mark’s Gospel (Plate 5.2) and probably included a half-page picture in the Gospel of Matthew (Wormald & Alexander 1977, 7). It would have been on the now missing folio (between folios 57v and 58) whose text began with Matthew 26:30, ‘And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives’, the same verse which is inscribed over



Plate 5.1 The Book of Kells. Matthew 26:6: *Et ymno dicto exierunt in montem oliveti.*
The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 114r.



Plate 5.2 The Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels. The Betrayal and Arrest of Christ. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. MS 45–1980, fol. 83v.

the picture on folio 114r in the Book of Kells. It seems unlikely that the missing picture would have duplicated the scene of the Arrest in St Mark's Gospel. As the surviving pictures within the gospel texts in the Breton book are positioned immediately next to the words they illustrate, the picture on the missing folio could have been similarly related to its text, Matthew 26:30–43, which describes the Mount of Olives and the Agony in the Garden. Alternatively, if the picture had been positioned first, on the upper half of the recto of the missing folio, it could possibly have referred back to the facing text on fol. 57v, Matthew's account of the Last Supper. This is the text which faces the picture on fol. 114r in the Book of Kells.

Despite these and other intriguing hints of correspondences between the two manuscripts' pictorial highlighting of the text, however, the narrative mode of the scene of the Arrest in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels, giving a literal illustration of its accompanying text, distinguishes it radically from the mysterious image in the Book of Kells whose techniques are more closely paralleled in the Crucifixion at the end of Matthew in the Insular Durham Gospels, MS A.11.17, folio 38.3v (Plate 3.7). This is not a literal illustration of St John's account of the piercing of Christ's side but offers a visual exegesis of John 19:37 and related texts.

Though it clearly alludes to Christ's death, the Crucifixion scene also evokes His exaltation at the Second Coming when 'every eye shall see him' and at last recognise the divine identity of the one who was pierced (Revelation 1:7). Pictorially, the standard exegetical linking of John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7 is suggested by augmenting Jesus's *titulus* on the Cross, *Hic est ihs rex iudaeorum*. The Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* and the phrase *initium et finis*, taken from the description of the glorified Christ in Revelation 1:8 and inscribed on either side of the head of the crucified Christ, thus provide a concealed key to His divine identity, hidden from many at the Crucifixion. Furthermore, Christ is depicted as a living hieratic figure coterminous with the cosmological Cross, dwarfing the symmetrical attendant figures and their literal historical role as His executioners. Longinus and the spongebearer are shown with legs in profile moving inwards as though they are being drawn to Christ lifted up on the Cross.

The iconography enables the onlooker to see both the crucified and the exalted body of Christ in a single image which provides a visual metaphor for the spiritual perception of the humanity and divinity of Christ as inseparable aspects of His identity. It refers to the past, to eternity and to the present. As in the Kells image, the hypnotic gaze of Christ in the Durham Gospels Crucifixion compels some response from the onlooker. The marginal inscriptions around the picture [106] exhort the reader who would reign with Christ first to suffer with Him. But the image of the wounded Christ with priestly gesture and robe, attended by seraphim whose chant is echoed in the *Sanctus* of the mass, also has allusions to the Eucharist as a sacramental re-enactment of the Passion and a sharing in the body of Christ (O'Reilly 1988, 89–90). The Durham Crucifixion provides a visual focus for meditation on the multiple meanings of the body of Christ.

The orans pose and the attendant figures

A number of the Durham Gospels' themes, iconographic conventions and exegetical techniques seem relevant in studying the more elusive image in the Book of Kells. The Irish iconography of the Crucifixion, of which the Durham Gospels is the earliest manuscript version, preserves the Early Christian iconography of showing Christ's hands outstretched on the Cross in orans pose. Variants of the orans gesture could also evoke the Crucifixion even when the Cross itself was not depicted, as in the Holy Land pilgrims' ampullae or the fifth-century wooden doors of Santa Sabina, Rome, where Christ's hands are raised almost to shoulder height (Schiller 1972, pl. 325, 326). The convention appears in the cross-head decoration of a number of High Crosses including Muiredach's cross at Monasterboice and survives late in Irish examples such as the bronze Crucifixion plaque from Clonmacnoise and the Southampton Psalter (Henry 1967, pl. 8, 45, 76).

In the Kells picture, Christ's orant pose could readily evoke the Crucifixion. Furthermore, as Lewis noted (1980, 155), Christ's whole body forms a great X-shape recalling the Greek letter *chi*, both a sign of the Cross and the initial letter of His title *Christus*, which runs like a leitmotiv through the decoration of the manuscript. Its occurrence in Matthew's account of the Crucifixion may throw some light on its function in the image of the orant Christ on fol. 114r. The words of Matthew 27:38, *Tunc crucifixerant xpi cum eo duos latrones*, are framed and decorated on fol. 124r and arranged to form an X (Plate 5.3). The immediately preceding verse is lavishly spaced on fol. 123r, occupying fifteen rather than the usual seventeen lines. The pricking of the page is carefully done, suggesting that the verso was reserved for a full-page illustration (Meehan 1990, 247) which would have formed a diptych with the X-shaped text on fol. 124r. The question why this text was so consciously chosen from all the possible parts of the Matthew's Crucifixion narrative for such highlighting is sharpened by the fact that the equivalent text in Luke 23:33 is distinguished with a full-page picture of the Crucifixion in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels, fol. 125r (Wormald & Alexander 1977, pl. 9 (Plate 6.1)).

The description of Christ crucified between or in the midst of two thieves occurs in all four gospel accounts where it is already interpreted as a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah would be numbered among [108] the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). Also, in exegesis and liturgy Habacuc's gnomic prophecy that the Lord would be manifested or made known between two animals was seen to be fulfilled by Christ in the midst of two thieves because at His Crucifixion His humanity and His divinity were revealed (Ó Carragáin 1986, 383–89). In Early Christian art (echoed in the Bradfer-Lawrence Crucifixion scene) the two thieves are shown as diminutive identical figures, their historical role as the malefactors on Golgotha strictly subordinated to their role in the spiritual interpretation of the gospel text. The decorative treatment of this gospel passage in the Book of Kells suggests such a revelation of the identity of the Crucified. The previous page of text fol. 123r, ends with the centred text of the *titulus* of the Cross: *Hic est rex iudeorum*. As in the Durham Gospels, though on a much grander scale, Jesus of



Plate 5.3 The Book of Kells. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS 58, fol. 124r.

Nazareth's bare title is then augmented on fol. 124r for those with eyes to see, by arranging the very next verse of text, itself revealing Christ's fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, in the form of the initial of *Christus*, the Greek rendering of His Messianic title. The three groups of onlookers clustered in the margins of this *chi*-shaped text look left, across the page to fol. 123v which may have been reserved for some kind of Crucifixion image. The onlookers graphically evoke the common scriptural and exegetical use of looking and seeing as a metaphor for the spiritual insight or recognition enjoined on the reader.

The chiasmic structure of the text on fol. 124r is a key to the identity of the Crucified which is concealed in His names and titles and in the literal text of the gospel Crucifixion account. The *chi*-shaped image on fol. 114r may have provided a similar gloss on the Passion evoked by the orant gesture of Christ. He is shown between two crosses. In the Crucifixion plaque from Clonmacnoise Christ is shown in orant pose, not attached to a cross but flanked by the lance and sponge bearers and also by two small crosses, possibly recalling the two thieves (Henry 1967, pl. 8).

In this discussion of the Kells image, normally interpreted as Christ between His captors at His Arrest, it has been seen that representations of Christ between His executioners or between the two thieves could, paradoxically, convey a manifestation of His divinity. Drawing on imperial iconography, the image of Christ as a dominant central figure symmetrically flanked by two unidentified smaller figures – a pair of angels, men, birds, animals or even fish – was used in a wide variety of contexts in Early Christian art. Most often, the glorified body of Christ attended and acclaimed by flanking figures is represented by means of the Cross or the *chi-rho* (both of which are implied in Christ's pose in the Kells picture). Some examples show the figures moving inwards, as in the Holy Land ampulla (Bobbio 2), where the heads as well as the bodies of the two attendant angels are seen in profile, their legs clearly moving towards the Cross like the figures flanking the cruciform Christ in Kells (Grabar 1958, XXXIII). Early Insular examples include the Pictish Aberlemno roadside cross-slab (Henderson I 1987, pl. 1.b) and the Fahan Mura slab in Donegal; on the shaft of the Carndonagh Cross in Donegal Christ in orans pose is flanked by two figures whose heads as well as their legs are seen in profile moving towards him (Henry 1965, pl. 54, 56). Late derivatives of the iconography survive in the Anglo-Saxon ivory from North Elmham, showing two angels lifting up the Cross before the gaze of men, and the Winchester Psalter, fol. 35r where a pair of angels grasp a large cross and raise it up before an altar (O'Reilly 1988, pl. 1, 6). The scene may carry some reminiscence of the Good Friday *Adoratio Crucis* ceremony in which a cross is exalted by two deacons and the congregation recognise in it the means of their salvation, the *lignum crucis* representing both the suffering and the exaltation of the Crucified. The image suggests the contemplative theme of all creation being drawn to the Cross in fulfilment of Christ's prophecy 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things unto me' (John 12:32).

The foregoing examples illustrate three important Early Christian iconographic conventions of interest in interpreting the unique image on fol. 114r in Kells. The Crucifixion could be suggested by the figure of Christ in orans pose without showing the Cross itself; the exalted body of Christ could be depicted by the Cross alone or by the *chi-rho*; the figure of Christ or, more usually, the Cross or *chi-rho* could be shown acclaimed, approached or touched by a pair of identical small flanking figures who variously acknowledge [109] Christ's identity or are drawn to Him. The Kells image, placed before the account of the Passion, presents an enigma. The profile form of the flanking figures, contrasted with Christ's centrality, has been seen as 'indicating the opposition of evil to good' (Alexander 1990, 283). Christ is apparently being seized and lifted up, His feet dangle as though He is hanging and His pose suggests the Crucifixion, and yet it has been seen that the same pose could be viewed as a theophany. As in the Durham Gospels' Crucifixion, which simultaneously presents both the suffering and the exalted body of Christ, so in the Kells scene the two are shown in a single image because the two aspects of Christ's identity – His humanity and divinity – are inseparable. The ambiguity and the shape-shifting of the visual image are essential to the presentation of this paradox.

The image of the faithful being drawn to Christ is closely connected with the concept of their union with Him. Most typically this was represented by a central cross or *chi-rho* flanked or touched by two identical creatures, often peacocks associated with vine-scrolls and chalices suggesting the sacramental and eschatological incorporation of the faithful into Christ: 'I am the vine, ye are the branches' (John 15:5). The Book of Kells freely adapts this Early Christian tradition in the picture now bound as fol. 32r. Two peacocks on vines issuing from chalices flank a golden cross surmounting Christ enthroned among the angelic ministry of the heavenly liturgy. On a sixth-century book-cover from Syria, the motif of two identical saints supporting the arms of the central Cross from beneath and raising it is combined with the border motif of vine-scrolls stemming from chalices (Buckton 1984, pl. 76). Similarly, on fol. 114r in the Book of Kells the two figures holding the cruciform Christ by the arms are flanked by two vines rising from chalices in the column shafts bordering the scene.

Ruminatio

In a literal reading of fol. 114r as the Arrest of Christ, Nordenfalk (1977, 124) saw the two plant forms twining around the inscription, *Et ymno dicto exierunt in montem oliveti*, as an indication of the landscape setting of the scene, reflecting the pilgrim Arculf's testimony, recorded by Adomnán of Iona in *De locis sanctis*, that the Mount of Olives was clothed in vines and olive trees (Meehan 1958, 64–65). Farr (1989), however, noted that the two plant forms seem to stem awkwardly but deliberately from the heads of the two flanking figures like 'anthropomorphized olive trees', and has made the interesting suggestion that exegesis of Zacharias'

vision of the golden candelabrum in the Temple attended by two olive trees which are also described as the 'two sons of oil that stand by the Lord of the whole world' (Zacharias 4:1–14; Revelation 11:4) 'probably inspired the illustration in the Book of Kells depicting Christ with attendant figures' (Farr 1989, 225, 245). Dr Farr has searched for an exegetical or liturgical connection between Zacharias 4 and Matthew's text at this point but concludes: 'No single exegesis is known to provide a complete explanation of the picture' (1989, 251).

The present approach is concerned not with seeking a specific source or categorical meaning but with viewing the detail of the two plant forms as part of the literal 'text' of the Kells picture and with attempting a spiritual interpretation of the kind so heavily documented in the patristic literature inherited by Insular monasticism. The inheritance was not simply of texts but of a whole method of reading and imagining.

In the monastic *lectio divina* practice of prayerful rumination on the literal text of Scripture in order to discern its underlying spiritual meaning for the present reader, mental concordances were formed from chains of texts linked not necessarily by historical and literary ties, but often by their common use of a word such as *lignum* or *arbor*, the suggestion of a sound or visual image, or by their liturgical associations; allusion to one text could call to mind others in the chain and some texts belonged to more than one chain. Some of the rhetorical techniques used in decoding Scripture, which were applied to text-related pictorial images, involved plays on words; texts featuring names and titles prompted particularly arcane interpretation. In different contexts a text or an image might carry different connotations, and compilations of epithets for Christ contained apparently incompatible items. The mystery of Christ, encoded in Scripture, was seen to speak simultaneously through all these devices and images and layers of meaning but could never be reduced to any one of them.

In this alien thought-world of the free but not arbitrary association of ideas, the detail of the two plant forms entwined around the Kells inscription concerning the Mount of Olives, pressing around the head and shoulders of Christ and connecting Him to the two flanking figures, might well have proceeded from and prompted discursive meditation. There is, for example, a large exegetical literature on Christ as the olive or the olive tree. Two texts are of particular interest in studying the Kells image of the 'anthropomorphized olive trees'. Romans 11:16–24 warns that the wild olives which have been grafted into the good olive tree must persevere and bear fruit or be cut out. Commentators developed St Paul's application of this image to the faithful who take root and grow in Christ, becoming one with him through faith. The image was linked with the classic text in Romans 6:3–5 exhorting the faithful to be crucified with Christ and buried with Him through baptism into death in order to rise with Him to newness of life: 'For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection'. This could be cross-referenced with various other scriptural texts describing the righteous as a tree, becoming like the Tree of Life, a symbol of spiritual regeneration (Ladner 1961) widely used in exegesis.

In such an exegetical chain of texts, the faithful are enjoined, without any sense of incongruity, to be [110] grafted and rooted in Christ the olive tree and also to feed on the fruit of the olive. Both senses are frequently mingled with the image of Christ as the vine, His true disciples as branches (John 15:1–8), which again combines allusions both to the incorporation of the faithful into the body of Christ, the Church, and to the Eucharist on which the faithful feed. There may be a similar cross-fertilisation between the images of the vine and the olive in the Kells picture where the two figures grafted in Christ are closely associated with the plant forms overhead, presumably olive trees, but are also flanked by entwined vine-scrolls.

The Johannine image, ‘I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit’ (John 15:5), may have a further and particular relevance to the context of the Kells picture. Read at a literal level, its inscription ‘When they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives’ seems a narrative detail strongly out of keeping with the picture’s hieratic quality. At the equivalent point in St John’s Gospel (14:31) however, Christ’s words are immediately followed by His great theological discourse (John 15:1–7) which opens with the image of the true vine and its branches. This discourse was regarded by some commentators as the words that Christ spoke to His disciples and prayed to His Father, both for His disciples and for all believers, on the way from the Last Supper to His betrayal and arrest. Commentators harmonised this with the comment in Matthew and Mark that after the Last Supper, when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Read in the tradition of *lectio divina* the brief text on fol. 114r is thus transformed and its underlying spiritual meaning for the reader is enlarged below in the magisterial image of Christ in union with and praying for the faithful, called to abide in Him and share in His Passion and exaltation.

Other commentators, following Jerome, dwelt on the significance in the synoptic gospels of the designation ‘Mount of Olives’ which is highlighted by the olive trees in the tympanum of the Kells picture. Bede interpreted the scene of Christ leading His disciples from the Last Supper up to the Mount of Olives in Mark 14:26 (the exact equivalent passage to Matthew 26:30, which is inscribed above the Kells picture) as a continuing image of spiritual ascent for the reader. By receiving the sacraments and through the power of Christ’s prayer, the faithful are led to the higher virtues and to the inner anointing of the Holy Spirit (Hurst 1960, 613). Alluding to the chrism used in the ‘sacrament of the perfecting of the soul’ (Daniélou 1956, 126) in his commentary on the Ascension, Bede sees Christ victorious, again leading His disciples to Olivet and ascending the Mount of Chrism ‘to send forth the Holy Spirit by whose anointing we are taught all things’ (Martin 1988, 1.12). He makes use of the common idea of the Mount of Olives as a place of unction, which for Prudentius had been symbolised by the rich liquid oozing from the olive trees growing there (Thomson 1953, 366.).

The paradisaical Tree of Life was itself sometimes identified with the olive tree which, particularly in the eastern church, symbolised Christ as the source of the sacraments, not only those which involved anointing with oil or the mixture of oil

and balm known as chrism, but also the sacrament of the Eucharist (Murray 1975, 113–14). Holy Land ampullae in Bobbio and Monza, including those depicting the Cross as the Tree of Life, are inscribed ‘Oil from the Tree of Life from the Holy Places of Christ’ and contained oil which had presumably been brought into contact with the relics of the True Cross; the pilgrim Arculf reported that those relics exuded a fragrant healing liquid ‘somewhat like oil’ (Meehan 1958, 110–11). The oils and chrism blessed during the Maundy Thursday Eucharist were described as proceeding from the green wood or tree (Dumas 1981, 82).

Nomen Christi

The olive tendrils over and around the head of Christ and His attendants in the Kells picture act rather like a visual pun or even an abbreviation mark over the initial letter *chi* of His title formed by the pose of His body. Commentators repeatedly dwell on His sacred monogram, names and titles as clues to His identity: He is both *Christus*, meaning the Anointed One, and He is the chrism with which His followers are sacramentally anointed and thereby participate in His own anointing and priesthood and kingship. In receiving the invisible anointing of the Holy Spirit at His Incarnation Christ was revealed as man; in pouring forth the Spirit through the anointing of the sacraments His divinity is manifest (Martin 1988, 35).

The paradox of Christ’s title was above all explored in extensive patristic exegesis on the Song of Solomon which was a crucial text for monastic contemplatives. The second verse *Oleum effusum nomen tuum* (‘Thy name is as oil poured out’) was universally interpreted as referring to the name of Christ. This unguent is fragrant: *Fragrantia unguentis optimis*. Spiritually interpreted, the next verse shows the souls of those seeking the Bridegroom, Christ, beseeching Him ‘Draw me [*Trahe me*]. We will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments’. The prayer is at the centre of a chain of texts about the mystical life including Christ’s prophecy of His Crucifixion: *Et ego si exaltatus* [. . .] *omnia traham ad me ipsum* (John 12:32), which has already been cited here in the suggestion that the image in the Book of Kells shows, at one level of viewing, the crucified and glorified Christ lifted up and drawing the flanking figures to Himself.

The Song of Solomon image of the faithful being drawn by Christ, the fragrant unguent or oil that has been poured out, is elaborated in the commentary of Origen which was immensely important, through Latin translations and reconstructions, in the history of the exegesis of the text and of the whole tradition of the multi-layered spiritual interpretation of Scripture. Those seeking perfection and beatitude will ‘run towards the perfume of his unguent’, drawn not only [111] by their sense of smell but also by the sense of tasting and eating, by hearing, seeing and touching. The five senses, Origen explains, followed by Ambrose and Augustine, are not bodily faculties but ‘those divine senses of the inner man’ who is ‘trained to discern good and evil’. The divine sense of scent is the power of spiritual perception which, ‘having picked once up the scent of Christ [. . .] leads on from life unto life’ (Lawson 1957, 80–81). These interior senses are involved in

the spiritual interpretation of Scripture. In a typical exegetical conceit, the faithful who are drawn to Christ also draw the Word of God to themselves.

Viewed again in the light of this exegesis, several details in the Book of Kells picture become re-focused. The olive plants stem not from the heads of the attendant figures but from the vessels positioned above them. Olive tendrils cascade down ('as oil poured out'), linking the two flanking figures to Christ, touching the nose of the one on Christ's left, but the mouth of the one on His right. Their profile heads show two eyes gazing directly at Christ, two ears are clearly shown. In addition to their symmetrical gestures of holding Christ's arms, one of them reaches out and touches Him. The strangely exaggerated movement of their legs may now, for those who know the Song of Solomon text, suggest they are running towards the name of Christ which is concealed in His *chi* pose and in the olive plants: both the one anointed and the oil. To the five discerning spiritual senses the name of Christ reveals His nature. They draw Him to themselves. Gregory the Great pondered the traditional interpretation of Song of Solomon 1:2, *Oleum effusum nomen tuum*, as referring to the name of Christ. In order for oil or the aromatic unguent derived from it to be effective, argues Gregory, it must be poured out from the vessel so that it can spread its perfume. This is seen as a metaphor of the Incarnation: if God had not poured Himself out into the world in our nature, we would have had no means of knowing Him. When He poured Himself out, while remaining God He manifested Himself as man. The image is then rephrased: He who was of divine condition emptied Himself out (*exinaniuit*), taking the condition of a slave. Like Origen, Gregory is here quoting from the great Holy Week hymn from Philippians 2:5–11 where Christ is described as emptying Himself (not of His divinity but of His glory) in order to become man and suffer death on the Cross, for which reason, paradoxically, the Father 'hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names [. . .] that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:9–11). Gregory emphasises that the Philippians phrase 'he emptied himself out' is exactly what is meant in the Song of Solomon text describing Christ as oil, 'he poured himself out': *Quod Paulus dixit "exinaniuit", hoc Salomon dixit "effudit"* (Bélanger 1984, 102).

The image was widely cited outside the context of Song of Solomon commentaries. In his commentary on the Psalms, Augustine relates the image to the outpouring of Christ's redeeming mercy to all: 'You did not lock up your unguent in Jerusalem as in a vessel, but having as it were broken the vessel (*sed tanquam confracto vase*) you poured out the unguent through the world so that it might be fulfilled what is said in holy Scripture: *Unguentum effusum est nomen tuum*' (Dekkers & Fraipont 1955, 219).

Priest and victim

The repeated rhetorical emphasis on the verb *effundere* in the Song of Solomon exegesis of Christ's title as a key to His mystery derives much of its force from

Christ's own use of the verb in describing His blood poured out for the remission of sins: *Hic est enim sanguis meus novi testamenti qui effundetur pro vobis et pro multis in remissionem peccatorum*. This text appears on the page directly facing the image in the Book of Kells. Matthew's account of the Last Supper (read during the Maundy Thursday Eucharist) is spaced out on fol. 113r so that the whole of Christ's words of the institution of the Eucharist and His promise of the eschatological banquet and union it prefigures (Matthew 26:26–29) occur on fol. 113v. The words *pro vobis* are an addition to the Vulgate text and are found in the Roman Canon (which is quoted in the Stowe Missal [Warner 1915, 13]). Other phrases (here shown in *bold*) have been inserted into Christ's words after breaking and giving bread to His disciples: *Accipite edite **ex hoc omnes**. Hoc est enim corpus meum **quod confringitur pro saeculi vita*** (Plate 3.2). [112]

The additions sound like a liturgical reminiscence. The verb *confringere* is not found in the Roman Canon but in the Gallican and Milanese words of institution. St Ambrose's instructions to the newly baptised quote from the mass prayers: *Accipite et edite ex hoc omnes, hoc est enim corpus meum, quod pro multis confringetur* (Jungmann 1951, 52). One of the confessions of faith which follow the breaking of the bread in the eclectic *Stowe Missal* reads: *Credimus in hac confractione corporis et effusione sanguinis nos esse redemptos* from which Warren inferred that *confringere* may have been used 'in the ancient Celtic prayer of Consecration' (Warren 1881, 241, 265; Warner 1915, 17). Textual variants and liturgical reminiscences were often preserved in exegetical quotations of Scripture. Commenting on Luke's account of the Last Supper, Bede cites the account in I Corinthians 11:24–26, but gives the words of institution as *Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis confringitur*, using *confringitur* rather than *traditur* (Hurst 1960, 378).

The immense exegetical literature on the Eucharist as the re-enactment of the Passion begins in the New Testament: 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come' (I Corinthians 11:26). The passage is a fixed lection at mass in the *Stowe Missal*. The priest, deacons, the liturgical vessels and actions were seen to have a close correspondence to the stages of the Passion. The Irish treatise on the Mass appended to the *Stowe Missal* has detailed parallelism: 'The Host on the paten is Christ's flesh on the tree of the Cross. The fraction on the paten is the breaking of Christ's body with nails on the Cross [. . .]' (Warner 1915, 41). Bede describes the memory of the Passion being re-enacted at the altar with the difference that in the Eucharist 'his body and blood is no longer slain and spilled by the hands of infidels to their damnation, but is received by the mouths of the faithful to their salvation' (Hurst 1955, 106). The most detailed evocation is in the catechesis of the influential fourth-century commentator Theodore of Mopsuestia, some of whose works were certainly known to Insular exegetes (Ramsay 1912). He voices the common belief that the angels of the heavenly liturgy invisibly present at every

mass are represented by the deacons who assist the celebrant. By means of such figures or symbols of our salvation,

We must also think of Christ being at one time led and brought to His Passion, and at another time stretched on the altar to be sacrificed for us. And when the offering which is about to be placed (on the altar) is brought out in the sacred vessels of the paten and the chalice, [by the deacons], we must think that Christ our Lord is being led and brought to His Passion, not, however, by the Jews [. . .] but by the invisible hosts of ministry who are sent to us and who were also present when the Passion of our Salvation was being accomplished.

(Mingana 1933, 85–86)

In the Durham Gospels the presence of the angels at the Crucifixion alludes to the eucharistic and eschatological significance of the Passion. As in the Kells image, Christ's orant gesture, His sheer scale, centrality and majesty do not suggest a victim taken against His will. In both images He is robed in human flesh but may also be seen vested as a great High Priest, an image evoked in Hebrews 4:14, 7:15–27 which is repeatedly cited in exegesis on the Last Supper. Both pictures focus attention on Christ's seamless garment (John 19:23–24) signifying His Body, the Church. In the Kells picture Christ confronts the onlooker, articulating the accompanying text: 'Take, eat [. . .] This is my body which is broken for the life of the world [. . .] This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you'. The celebrant at mass takes the priestly role of Christ: 'he breaks the bread [. . .] so that Our Lord might draw all to him' (Mingana 1933, 107). Through the breaking of the bread, the faithful partake of the body of Christ and become one body with Him (I Corinthians 10:16–17).

The priestly gesture of Christ in the Kells picture may carry a reminiscence of the ceremony of *sustentatio* which is already described in the earliest Roman *ordines* of c. 700. Before the Pope celebrated mass, he stretched out his hands to two deacons who took hold of his arms and attended and supported him at the entrance to the sanctuary, at the offertory and again at the communion (Jungmann 1951, 69). The liturgical gesture, derived from Byzantine court ceremonial, survives in German imperial iconography. In the Sacramentary of Henry II the arms of the emperor, who is holding up his regalia, are supported by two flanking ecclesiastics, like Moses supported by Hur and Aaron in Exodus 17:10–12 (Beckwith 1969, pl. 95, 102; Elbern 1962, pl. 301). In a related image from an ivory plaque once on the shrine of St Millán de la Cogolla (1053–67), the saint is a dominating central figure in a chasuble with hands extended in cruciform orans gesture as he celebrates mass (Zarnecki 1971, pl. 156). The chalice and book he holds in either hand are supported by much smaller flanking figures.

The present chapter has traced the twin themes of the recognition of Christ's identity and the drawing near and union of the faithful with Him and has given

examples of possible complementary approaches to the Kells image through the Early Christian iconography of the flanked orant, Cross or *chi-rho*; through *ruminatio* on images such as the *arbor vitae* and the *nomen Christi*; through the relationship of the image with the texts inscribed above it and facing it. The image is a highly original creation but one within well-formed iconographic traditions and with parallels in the rhetorical and often arcane techniques of monastic *lectio divina*. Although an apparently static design, it is concerned with two major processes of transformation: the revelation of the mystery of Christ and the response this requires of the reader. The dominant visual image on fol. 114r of the Book of Kells is literally the body of Christ. This communicates directly with the devotional intensity of an icon. It is also a great metaphor, holding in tension many-layered and simultaneous allusions which provide a focus for meditation on Christ's Body, incarnate, glorified, sacramental and [113] mystical. This mystery, beyond all words and images, demands the language of paradox which conceals as it reveals.

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THE BOOK OF KELLS AND TWO BRETON GOSPEL BOOKS

Introduction

The Book of Kells differs from other surviving Insular gospel books not only because it develops insular traditions of layout and decoration on an unparalleled scale, but because it includes features such as textual illustrations and the Beast canon tables which seem innovative within the insular tradition. Increasingly, however, scholars have argued that during the eighth century there must have been important developments in manuscripts now missing which would have provided us with a context for understanding more fully the nature of Kells's achievement.

In the decorative repertoire of contemporary insular metalwork and monumental sculpture and in surviving manuscripts there are clues to what has been lost. Most poignantly the mutilated remains of the Durham Gospels offer the closest extant comparison in scale and character to the Book of Kells's decorative articulation of the text. Hints of early insular practices may also be preserved in later manuscripts such as the two Gospel books produced at Armagh in the twelfth century,¹ and in the work of continental scriptoria. The evidence of insular influence on the eclectic scriptorium of Echternach in the early eighth century, for example, has recently enabled Nancy Netzer to suggest that the Beast canon tables were already known in Ireland long before they appear in Kells and in manuscripts of the Carolingian Renaissance.² The well-known contacts between the early insular and Breton monastic worlds might raise hopes that Breton manuscripts could similarly provide a key to early insular developments. Unfortunately, apart from the Gatianus Gospels, which has

1 Durham Cathedral Lib. A.II.17; London, British Lib. Harley Mss 1023 and 1802. J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts, 6th to 9th century*, London 1978, catalogue nos. 10, 76, 77. I am grateful to Dr Patrick McGurk and Dr David Dumville for helpful general discussion of Breton Gospel books though neither can be held responsible for the opinions expressed here.

2 Nancy Netzer, 'The origin of the Beast canon tables reconsidered' in *The Book of Kells*, ed. Felicity O'Mahony, forthcoming.

been described as ‘a copy of a very sumptuous, probably Irish, Gospel book’,³ surviving illuminated gospels from the Breton and Loire region are of later ninth or early tenth century date. The attempt to discern specifically early insular features in works produced in an entirely different script and format during and after the Carolingian Renaissance in a region which retained a highly distinctive style, is obviously hazardous. The two late continental gospel books discussed in the present chapter look very different from Insular gospels and seem to bear the marks of only the most general and distant ‘insular influence’ in features such as the decoration of the gospel *incipits* and the *chi-rho* marking Matthew 1:18. A closer examination, however, may show that these two manuscripts can offer contrasting contributions to the current discussion of the cultural context in which the Book of Kells was produced.

I. The Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels

The Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels (Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum MS 49–1980) was identified by Francis Wormald as a late ninth or early tenth century Breton manuscript. He [217] described it as essentially a Carolingian book showing strong decorative influences from Tours, a number of Merovingian elements, few insular symptoms and some clear indications of the influence of more than one Late Antique work. Wormald concluded: ‘There is one location where we find these conditions and that is the valley of the Loire, which is known mainly from a group of Breton gospels which centre around the Gospels of Landevennec’.⁴ The Cambridge manuscript is difficult to classify more exactly, partly because textual and palaeographical work remains to be done on this group of manuscripts and partly because the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels is unusual among the group in, for example, its much less stylised renderings of decorative motifs and the human form.⁵ Its iconography further distinguishes it from the sub-group of five Breton manuscripts, including the Landevennec Gospels, which are characterised by

3 Paris, Bibl. Nat. Ms nouv. acq. lat. 1587; J.J.G. Alexander, *op. cit.*, cat. 56, pl. 270–73; G.L. Micheli, *L'enluminure du haut Moyen Âge et les influences irlandaises*, Brussels 1939, pp. 60–61; pp. 96–100. Patrick McGurk, ‘The Gospel book in Celtic lands before AD 850: contents and arrangement’, *Irland und die Christenheit. Bibelstudien und Mission* (eds.) Proinséas Ni Chatháin and Michael Richter, Stuttgart 1987, pp. 165–89: ‘the characteristics of Gatianus are most plausibly accounted for as Irish influence and not as relics of a common Celtic past’, p. 176.

4 Francis Wormald, Jonathan Alexander, *An early Breton Gospel book. A ninth-century manuscript from the collection of H.L. Bradfer-Lawrence*, Roxburghe Club, Cambridge 1977, pp. 2–4, 10. Partial facsimile.

5 Reviewing Wormald and Alexander, *op. cit.*, Carl Nordenfalk thought the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels ‘more likely to have been written in one of the Loire monasteries about 950 or so’, *Burlington Magazine* 120, 1978, pp. 243–44: this would seem rather too late. I am grateful to David Dumville for this reference.

their famous animal-headed evangelists.⁶ Jonathan Alexander has instead located it among five or six related manuscripts of Breton or possibly Breton origin which feature seated evangelist author portraits.⁷ Even so, the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels has several iconographic features which are unique within the latter group and are unusual or rare in early western manuscripts generally: '[. . .] by far the rarest phenomenon is the inclusion of textual illustration. The practice of textual illustrations incorporated into the gospel text is unknown in Western continental illuminated manuscripts before the Ottonian period when it appears in German manuscripts, probably as the result of Greek influence. The only exception is the Book of Kells'.⁸

Referring to the important work of Patrick McGurk, which suggests that the textual illustrations in the Book of Kells are a development of the long established insular habit of highlighting certain passages in the gospels with enlarged coloured initials,⁹ Wormald concluded that the presence of textual illustrations in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels 'indicates some connexion with Insular ways'. On the other hand, Alexander questioned the insular connexion and has briefly suggested that some early Christian western gospel books which no longer survive may also have had illustrations inserted within the text.¹⁰

On fol. 124 of the Book of Kells, the words *Tunc crucifixerant cum eo duos latrones* from Matthew's account of the Crucifixion (Matthew. 27:38) occupy the entire page within a heavily ornamented frame (Plate 5.3). The words do not mark the beginning of any known lection and could easily have been fitted at the end

6 Bern, Burgerbibl., Cod. 85; Boulogne, Bibl. mun., Ms 8; Troyes, Bibl. mun. Ms 960; Oxford, Bodleian Lib., Ms Auct. D.2.16 (the 'Leofric Gospels'); New York, Public Lib., Ms 115 (the 'Harkness Gospels'). Illustrated in *Landévennec: aux origines de la Bretagne: 485-1985. XV^e centenaire de la fondation de l'abbaye*, Daoulas 1985, catalogue nos. 94-98. I am grateful to Michelle Brown for kindly lending me this catalogue. Jonathan Alexander notes that London, B.L., Egerton Ms 609 has similar beast-headed portraits 'and is also probably Breton', *op. cit.*, 14-15, n. 6; R. Crozet, 'Les représentations anthrozoomorphiques des évangélistes dans l'enluminure et dans la peinture murale aux époques carolingienne et romane' *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* I, 1958, 182-91.

7 Alençon, Bibl. mun. Ms 84; Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, W. 1; Tongeren, Cathedral Treasury; Oxford, Bodl. Lib., Ms Laud. lat. 26; Rome, Vatican Lib., San Pietro D.154; Wormald and Alexander *op. cit.*, pp. 15-23. Jonathan Alexander has further discussed the characteristics of these manuscripts in 'La résistance à la domination culturelle Carolingienne dans l'art Breton du IX^e siècle: le témoignage de l'enluminure des manuscrits', *Actes du Colloque du 15^e centenaire de l'abbaye de Landévennec, Avril 1985* ed. Marc Simon, Landévennec 1985, 269-80.

8 Wormald and Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

9 Patrick McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books from AD. 400-AD. 800*, Paris 1961, pp. 117-19 for list of Gospel passages emphasised by large initials in insular manuscripts. *Idem*, 'Two notes on the Book of Kells and its relation to other insular Gospel books' *Scriptorium* 9, 1955, pp. 105-07, argues that the parallels between the Book of Kells and other insular books in emphasising certain Gospel passages 'suggest that the illustrations within Kells can be seen not as erratic magnifyings of occasional texts, but as the development of a long established insular habit', p. 107.

10 *An early Breton gospel book*, p. 28 and J.J.G. Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

of the previous page of the gospel text on fol. 123 which is widely spaced, using only fifteen lines rather than the usual seventeen to the page. The last line on fol. 123 is an abbreviated form of the *titulus* inscription on the Cross: *Hic est rex iudeorum* (Matthew 27:37). Fol. 123v is blank. The three groups of little figures in the frame of the text from Matthew 27:37 gaze across from fol. 124r, directing the reader's attention towards the blank page which was probably intended to contain a picture.

The description of Christ crucified between two thieves occurs in all four gospel accounts of the Crucifixion, not as a mere narrative detail but as a fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:12 that the Messiah would be 'numbered among the transgressors'. Patristic and insular commentators also saw it as one of the fulfilments of the *vetus latina* text of Habacuc's prophecy that the Lord would be manifested between two animals.¹¹ Part of the text *Tunc crucifixerant cum eo duos latrones* is elaborately and obscurely arranged in Kells to form a larger X-shape, a motif which is frequently used elsewhere in the manuscript to allude to the Greek letter *chi*, the initial of the title Christus, meaning Messiah.¹² For those searching the Scriptures with the inner eye, the person crucified between two thieves is not simply the *rex iudeorum* of the *titulus* inscription on the Cross, but the Christ.

Iconographically this fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies had been depicted in Early Christian and Carolingian representations of the Crucifixion by showing Christ between two tiny, often symmetrical figures of the two thieves who do not function as [218] naturalistic narrative details but as part of a manifestation of Christ's divinity. The whole-page picture of the Crucifixion on fol. 125 in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels is within this iconographic tradition (Plate 6.1). The meaning of Christ's title on the inscription on the Cross – *rex iudeorum* – is immeasurably extended by the presence of Late Antique personifications of the sun and moon, symbols of his cosmic sovereignty. What distinguishes the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels picture from others of the type is that it is placed within the gospel text. The page facing the picture concludes with Luke 23:22: 'After they came to the place called Calvary there they crucified him and the thieves, one on the right hand and the other on the left'. Moreover, this text does not quite reach the bottom of the page and the last one and a half ruled lines remain blank. The next short sentence in Luke's text could, therefore, have been fitted into this space but instead appears on the verso of the picture.

Clearly, there are enormous differences from the handling of the gospel description of Christ between the two thieves in the Book of Kells. The style and iconography of the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels' picture is ultimately Early

11 Habacuc 3.2, *In media duorum animalium innotesceris*. See Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'The Ruthwell Cross Crucifixion poem', *Peritia* 6–7, 1987–88, pp. 1–71, 30.

12 Suzanne Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the Chi Rho page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36, 1980, pp. 139–59.



Plate 6.1 The Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels. The Crucifixion. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. MS 45-1980, fol. 125r.

Christian in origin, not insular, it is placed in Luke's account, not Matthew's, the script is Carolingian minuscule not insular majuscule, there is no embellishment or mysterious veiling of the text as in Kells. And yet the Breton-Loire book not only shares with Kells the distinction of having pictures within the gospel text, but manipulates the arrangement of the text to accommodate a picture of Christ between the thieves at precisely the same moment in the Passion narrative that the Kells artist manipulated the layout of the text on fol. 123 so that the enlarged and decorated description on fol. 124 of Christ crucified with two thieves should be paired with the facing blank page, fol. 123v, which it seems reasonable to assume was intended for a picture of the Crucifixion. This intention cannot, of course, be certain and some may argue that the extraordinary correspondence with the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels could be explained away as a freak coincidence. If so, the statistical probability of a second such coincidence seems small.

The whole-page picture on fol. 114r in the Book of Kells has usually been described as the Arrest of Christ illustrating the moment when the soldiers 'laid hands on Jesus and held him' (Plate 5.1). However the picture is positioned five whole pages *before* this episode in Matthew's narrative, Matthew 26:50, which is inscribed on fols. 116v–117 without any decorative embellishment.

The picture has been likened to the representation of the Arrest in a sixth-century Italian manuscript, the Gospels of St Augustine, which came to Anglo-Saxon England early. On fol. 125r Christ is shown flanked by two smaller profile figures who lay hands on him.¹³ The figures wear short tunics of differing colours, however, and the scene has a strong narrative quality. Not only does it include the related episode of a figure drawing a sword, it is set on a page divided into twelve little framed narrative episodes forming a harmonised gospel account of the Passion. Preceded by Judas's betrayal and followed by Christ being brought before Caiaphas and Pilate, the scene in the Gospels of St Augustine unambiguously depicts the Arrest. The picture of Christ between two figures on fol. 114r in the Book of Kells, in contrast, is a mysterious and hieratic image.¹⁴

In the tympanum is an inscription: *Et ymno dicto exierunt in Montem Oliveti* (Matthew 26:30) which concludes Matthew's account of the Last Supper. The preceding passage of the gospel text, inscribed on fol. 113v facing the picture on fol. 114r, records the words of Christ at the institution of the Eucharist, closing with his promise of the eschatological banquet (Matthew 26:26–29). The New Testament concept of the Eucharist as a re-enactment of the Passion (I Corinthians 11:26),

13 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Ms 286. Francis Wormald, *The miniatures in the Gospels of St Augustine*, Cambridge, CCC Ms 286, Cambridge 1954, pl. I.

14 The non-narrative aspects of the image are discussed by George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The insular Gospel books 650–800*, London 1987, pp. 162–63; Carol A. Farr, 'Lection and interpretation: the liturgical and exegetical background of the illustrations in the Book of Kells' unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas, Austin 1989, pp. 214–305; Jennifer O'Reilly, 'The Book of Kells, folio 114r: a mystery revealed yet concealed', *Age of migrating ideas*, (eds.) R.M. Spearman and John Higgitt, Edinburgh 1993, pp. 106–14.

which was elaborated in exegetical and liturgical literature, was represented by various iconographic conventions. The eighth-century Gellone Sacramentary has an early example of the practice of forming the initial letter “T” of the canon of the Mass from a depiction of the Crucifixion.¹⁵ The Bradfer-Lawrence [219] Crucifixion scene on fol. 125r incorporates the Carolingian iconography of showing a personification of Ecclesia receiving the eucharistic blood from the wound of the Crucified (Plate 6.1). The insular Durham Gospels shows Christ on the Cross robed as the orant High Priest and attended by two seraphim.¹⁶ Placed immediately before the beginning of the account of the Passion, the orant pose of Christ in the Kells picture on fol. 114r evokes the Crucifixion (Plate 5.1). By its association with the vines and chalices in the two columns which frame the picture and by its positioning opposite the text of the Last Supper, the image also recalls the Eucharist. Christ supported by the two attendant figures, stretches his hands in priestly sacrificial gesture, articulating the text on the facing page: ‘Take, eat. This is my body [. . .]’.

In contrast, the textual illustration in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels on fol. 83v unambiguously depicts the Betrayal and Arrest (Plate 5.2). The half-page miniature is unframed and spills into the margins. It exactly illustrates the gospel narrative inscribed on the lower half of the same page, Mark 14:42–46, which closely corresponds with Matthew’s version. Jesus is shown as a masterful figure who has just predicted this moment (Mark 14:41–42) and advances to meet his betrayer. He holds a scroll and his right hand is extended in a gesture of speech ‘and as he was yet speaking [. . .]’, verse 43. Judas ‘immediately going up to him’, verse 45, is depicted as in the sixth-century East Mediterranean Rabbula Gospels as a figure moving energetically from the right to embrace Christ.¹⁷ A figure with a short tunic seizes Jesus from the left: ‘they laid hands upon him and held him’, verse 46. On the far left, a figure without a halo (i.e. not a disciple) draws a huge sword and advances on another figure in a short tunic: ‘and one of those standing by, drawing out a sword, smote the servant of the chief priest and cut off his ear’, verse 47. The sword-bearer is not identified as St Peter (as he is in John’s Gospel) nor does Christ heal the servant as he does in Luke’s version. On the far right, one of the disciples begins to flee, anticipating verse 50 overleaf.

The Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels only has two surviving pictures within the gospel text, namely the Betrayal and Arrest in Mark and the Crucifixion in Luke. But there was probably a half-page picture in Matthew on the folio missing from between the folios now numbered 57v and 58r. Fol. 57v is Matthew 26:12–29, concluding with the account of the Last Supper, and fol. 58r is Matthew 26:43–55, beginning with Jesus in Gethsemane finding the disciples asleep and ending with

15 Paris, B.N. lat. 12048. fol. 143v.

16 C. Verey, T.J. Brown, E. Coatsworth (eds.), *The Durham Gospels*, Early English Mss in Facsimile, 20, Copenhagen 1980, fol. 38v.

17 C. Cecchelli, J. Furlani, M. Salmi (eds.), *The Rabbula Gospels. Facsimile edition of the miniatures of the Syrian ms Plut. I, 56 in the Medicaean-Laurentian Library*, Oltun and Lausanne 1959, p. 66, fol. 12, pl. 13.

Judas's betrayal and the arrest. In between, therefore, would have been Jesus's prophecy of the disciples' flight and of Peter's betrayal and the first part of the Agony in Gethsemane. This missing passage would have begun with Matthew 26:30, *Et hymno dicto exierunt in montem Oliueti*. This is precisely the same text which is inscribed on the picture facing Matthew's account of the Last Supper in the Book of Kells. Reasons have already been given here for thinking that the Kells picture on fol. 114r does not simply represent the narrative of the Arrest but offers a visual exegesis on the facing text of the Last Supper. Nor does it seem likely that the missing picture in Matthew in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels showed the Arrest because this scene is depicted on fol. 83v in Mark and the two gospels have similar accounts of the event. There are no off-sets to show at what point on the missing folio in Matthew the picture was positioned but, judging from the two surviving pictures in Luke and Mark, it is likely it would have been placed in immediate proximity to the text illustrated. It seems more probable, therefore, that the picture in Matthew would have been positioned on the recto rather than the verso of the missing folio of text. If so, it would have faced Matthew 26:12–29, which includes the entire text of the Last Supper, and the gospel text would have continued with Matthew 26:30 perhaps inscribed beneath the picture in the lower half of the facing recto. It is not being suggested here that the missing picture at this point of Matthew's text in the Bradfer-Lawrence book would have *looked* anything like that in Kells on fol. 114r. It could simply [220] have depicted the Last Supper. The two surviving pictures in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels have no sign of insular stylistic or iconographic influence, but, together with the canon tables and evangelist portraits, they do show that the continental artist had a variety of good Early Christian models available and the iconography of the Last Supper was well established in several media in Early Christian art, including surviving illustrated gospel books (such as the St Augustine's Gospels already cited).

The Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels may once have had a basic cycle of pictures related to Holy Week: possibly the Last Supper in Matthew's Gospel and certainly the Betrayal and Arrest in Mark and the Crucifixion in Luke. It would be satisfying to complete the cycle by reporting that the Resurrection is shown in John's Gospel but no picture survives there. However, the manuscript now ends at John 19:13. Any picture St John's Gospel may once have had would therefore have come in the missing section, John 19:14–21:25, which describes the Crucifixion (already illustrated on fol. 125 in Luke) and concludes with a greater number of Resurrection appearances than any of the synoptic gospels.¹⁸

There are very much more complex cycles of illustrations in illuminated gospel books surviving from the sixth century, though their pictures are not positioned within the gospel text. The Italian St Augustine's Gospels has one surviving

18 The Book of Kells also has no surviving textual illustration in John's Gospel; the manuscript now ends at John 17:13.

evangelist portrait, St Luke, surrounded by twelve tiny scenes from his gospel and one page already cited, fol. 125r which is divided into twelve panels and presents a gospel harmony of events from the Entry into Jerusalem until the Carrying of the Cross. The entire sequence of Christ's Birth, Ministry, Passion and Resurrection may have been represented through other such pages.¹⁹ The prefatory cycle of the Rossano Gospels has two whole-page and monumental narrative scenes from the Passion, each divided into two tiers, and a series of half-page scenes from the gospels, not only of events but even of parables, which are each set in a typological textual framework.²⁰ The Rabbula Gospels also has major whole page illustrations, including the Crucifixion, and a long cycle of gospel scenes arranged in the margins of the Canon Tables.²¹

These three manuscripts which happen to survive are of very diverse origin and style and show an astonishing variety of approach to gospel illustration. The surviving fragments of the sixth-century Cotton Genesis and the Vienna Genesis prove that textual illustrations were included in some luxury manuscripts of Old Testament books and it is not inconceivable that some Early Christian luxury gospel books or great bibles may also have had illustrations within the gospel text. The work of scholars on Carolingian and later Anglo-Saxon art increasingly suggests this likelihood.²² Kurt Weitzmann has made the salutary observation: 'It is an indication of the losses of Early Christian book illumination that of the most often represented subject, the portraits of the evangelists, only one single Greek example has come down to us'.²³

Early Christian influence is readily evident in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels, not only in the style and iconography of its evangelist portraits and textual illustrations, particularly the vigorous narrative of the Betrayal and Arrest on fol. 83v, but in the rich decoration of its canon tables whose architectural arcades are flanked by paired peacocks (fol. 21v), goats (fols. 17v–18), lions (fols. 19v–20) and small trees (fols. 18v–19, 20v–21). The motif of two identical lions with protruding tongues confronting each other over an arch, shared with another manuscript of Breton or Loire origin, Angers, Bibl. municipale MS 24 (20), had been incorporated in the

19 F. Wormald, *The miniatures in the Gospels of St Augustine*, pp. 3–5, 11–12, pl. 1.

20 Antonio Munoz, *Il Codice Purpureo di Rossano e il frammento Sinopense*, Rome 1907, pl. I–VIII, XI–XIV; Kurt Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian book illumination*, New York 1977, pl. 28–38, 41–42 for colour plates from all three Gospel books.

21 *Op. cit.*, see n. 17.

22 Bertrand Davezac, 'L'évangéliste de Chartres B. N. Lat. 9386. Contribution à l'étude de la peinture monastique carolingienne', *Cahiers archéologiques fin de l'antiquité et moyen âge*, XXVII, 1978, pp. 39–60. W. Koehler, 'An illustrated evangelistary of the Ada school and its model', *Jnl. of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 15, 1952, pp. 48–66; entry by Mildred Budny in Thomas Ohlgren (ed.), *Insular and Anglo-Saxon illuminated mss. An iconographic catalogue c. AD 625–1100*, New York and London, 1986, cat. 32. Gospel scenes, including the Passion, also appear in the extensive cycles of textual illustrations in the Carolingian Stuttgart and Utrecht Psalters which bear many indications of Early Christian influence.

23 *Late Antique and Early Christian book illumination*, p. 96.

decorative repertoire of Merovingian manuscripts such as Augustine's Commentary on the Heptateuch, Paris, Bibl. nat. lat. MS 12168.²⁴ Less immediately obvious is the adaptation of the motif in the Book of Kells, above the arches of the canon tables, fols. 2v–3, and above the whole-page picture of the orant Christ facing the text of the Last Supper, fol. 114. Both the architectural framework and the beasts have been so thoroughly transformed into an insular decorative idiom that it is far more difficult to [221] recognise the line of inheritance from the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity than in the case of the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels produced under the influence of the Carolingian Renaissance.

On present evidence it would seem that the very rare survival of pictures within the gospel text of Kells and the Bradfer-Lawrence book testifies to two independent adaptations of a shared inheritance of an Early Christian tradition of luxury book production, rather than suggesting that the continental artist took the concept of textual illustration from a peculiarly insular tradition.

Whether any other Insular gospel book besides the Book of Kells, however, also had textual illustrations cannot now be known for certain but remains a possibility. Insular gospel illumination was by no means confined to prefatory author portraits and evangelist symbols and the sole surviving picture in the Durham Gospels, which is positioned on the verso of the last page of St Matthew's Gospel (and is therefore, technically, outside the gospel text), may certainly be read as pictorial exegesis on the closing words of the gospel which are isolated within an ornate frame on the recto of the same folio.²⁵

II. BL Royal MS I.A.XVIII

The Book of Kells has one remaining textual illustration (fol. 202v) which has no parallel in the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels. Its context, however, has correspondences with an early tenth-century Breton Gospel book, London BL, Royal MS I.A.XVIII, which has been described as 'a more humble brother' of the Bradfer-Lawrence manuscript.²⁶

One of the most characteristic features of Insular gospel books is the decorative highlighting of the text of Christ's royal Genealogy in Matthew 1:1–17 followed by an enlarged and embellished *chi-rho* monogram of Christ's title at verse 18 which marks a second beginning of the gospel with Matthew's account of the Incarnation: *Christi autem generatio*. The Gatianus Gospels, Paris B.N. nouv. acq. lat. 1587 includes such a *chi-rho* among its reminiscences of insular decoration and it also occurs in a number of later books of Breton or Loire origin but in a transformed

24 C.R. Morey, E.K. Rand, C.H. Kraeling, 'The Gospel Book of Landévennec (the Harkness Gospels) in New York Public Library', *Art Studies* 8, 1931, pp. 225–86, pl. IX 19; E.H. Zimmermann, *Vorkarolingische Miniaturen* I, Berlin 1916, Tafel 148.

25 G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, pp. 80–85.

26 Wormald and Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Both manuscripts came to Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth century.

state, composed not of motifs ultimately derived from insular metalwork and calligraphy but from interwoven Carolingian acanthus, sometimes ornamented with small beast heads, as in Royal MS I.A.XVIII, fol. 13. Like the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels and other continental examples, the Royal manuscript differs from Insular gospels by inserting the rubric *In illo tempore* after the *chi-rho* so that the Incarnation reading opens with the second part of 1.18, *Cum esset desponsata* [. . .].

The lesser-known insular practice of highlighting the text of Christ's Genealogy in Luke 3:23–38 appears in the earliest surviving illuminated gospels, the Book of Durrow, fols. 134r–134v. The names of Christ's ancestors, each preceded by the phrase *qui fuit* are set out in columns, with two sets of these triple columns of words to the page. Several insular manuscripts also highlight Luke 4:1, the text which immediately follows the Genealogy, by enlarging and sometimes colouring its initial letter, word or line.²⁷ The Book of Kells develops both these traditions with unparalleled magnificence. The embellished listing of the Genealogy occupies five whole pages, fols. 200r–202r, and is immediately followed on fol. 202v by a whole-page picture facing the abbreviated opening words of Luke 4:1 on fol. 203r: *Ihs autem plenus Spiritus Sancto*. This text, set within a frame, is heavily ornamented and enlarged to fill the page (Plate 6.2).

Luke 4:1 differs from the corresponding verse opening Matthew's account of the three Temptations of Christ. Luke alone places Christ's Genealogy between the accounts of his Baptism and Temptation. Luke 4:1 is a link passage, first referring back to the Baptism by describing 'Jesus full of the Holy Spirit' returning from the Jordan, before going on to tell [222] how he was led into the desert for forty days to be tempted. Similarly, the picture on fol. 202v in the Book of Kells, showing a portrait bust of Christ surmounting a small shrine- or church-shaped structure and confronting the devil, may refer forward to the account of Christ's Temptation on the Temple roof (Luke 4:9–12, fol. 204r) and back to Luke's account of the descent of the Spirit at Christ's Baptism and to his priestly Genealogy.²⁸ As has been argued in detail elsewhere,²⁹ patristic exegesis on these Lucan texts uses the image of the Temple in Jerusalem as a prefiguring of the incarnate Body of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, and of His Body the Church, whose members are each called to become the Temple of the Holy Spirit at their own baptism when the devil is exorcised. The picture on fol. 202v may, therefore, be read as a metaphor of the Temple as the Body of Christ and can be seen to form a theological unity with the facing text from the opening of Luke 4:1: 'Jesus full of the Holy Spirit'.

There is a large gap in the surviving evidence separating the insular practice of modestly highlighting this text from Kells's elevation of it to the status of a second

27 Particularly the Hereford Gospels and Lindisfarne Gospels. For further examples of the decorative emphasis given to Luke 4:1 see Carol A. Farr, 'Lection and interpretation', pp. 143–61.

28 George Henderson, *Bede and the visual arts*, Jarrow Lecture, 1980, pp. 17–18; *From Durrow to Kells*, pp. 168–74.

29 Jennifer O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan genealogy', *The Book of Kells*, (ed.), Felicity O'Mahony, forthcoming. See also Carol A. Farr, 'Lection and interpretation', pp. 19–117.



Plate 6.2 The Book of Kells. Luke 4:1: *Ihs autem plenus Spiritus Sancto*. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. MS A.I.6 (58), fol. 203r.

gospel opening. The Breton Gospel Book London, BL Royal Ms I.A.XVIII may hint at the existence of now missing Insular gospel books which were closer to the Book of Kells than extant examples in stressing the importance of Luke 4:1 and even in emphasising its connection with Christ's Baptism and Genealogy.

In some Insular gospel books which arrange the long Lucan Genealogy in two sets of triple columns to the page, the second set of columns ends before the bottom of the page is quite reached. When this happens the gospel text, beginning with Luke 4:1, is continued in the remaining narrow columnar space on the page before resuming in long continuous lines as normal on the following page. Examples range from the earliest Insular gospels, the Book of Durrow, to the late Armagh manuscript, London BL Harley Ms 1802.³⁰ The Book of Durrow fits in as much text as the space will allow at the bottom of the Lucan Genealogy column on fol. 134v (Luke 4:1–3) but Harley 1802 fol. 92 only includes Luke 4:1–2a, the introductory words before Luke's narrative of the Temptation, even though there is room at the foot of the Lucan Genealogy for a little more text. The first word, the monogram *Ihs*, is considerably enlarged and touched with colour. Unlike the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels, the Breton Gospel Book Royal I.A.XVIII is broadly within this tradition. It has two sets of triple columns for the genealogy, enlivened with colour and with enlarged initial Qs for the recurring phrase *Qui fuit*. On 114v the second set of triple columns ends halfway down the right-hand side of the page and is followed by Luke 4:1–2. Only the opening nine words, however, *Ihs autem plenus Spu Sco regressus est a Jordane*, are inscribed in large display capitals, in five short lines of alternating colours, and the remaining words on the page, *et agebatur a Spiritu in desertum diebus quadraginta et tentabatur* are continued in the ordinary minuscule hand of the main text. The display letters of Luke 4:1 compare in size and colouring with some of the display lettering following the *Quoniam* on the Lucan Gospel *incipit* page.

It is the only gospel passage in the Breton manuscript, apart from the gospel openings themselves, to be given this decorative status; in its own idiom, it gives greater emphasis to the opening of Luke 4:1 than any surviving Insular gospel book does, apart from the Book of Kells. Nor can it be explained as marking a lection for, although the Royal manuscript is freely punctuated by rubrics, there is no *In illo tempore* inserted between the Lucan Genealogy and Luke 4:1. It is, of course, exceedingly difficult to interpret the possible significance of this phenomenon: is it entirely arbitrary or does it denote some contact with insular influences? There are two factors which point to the latter explanation. The first is the general but cumulative evidence of the other passages in the gospel text which are highlighted, though more modestly, in the Royal manuscript. [223]

The decorative emphasis of Luke 1:46 and 68, the opening of the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus* which are hallowed by their daily use as canticles in the monastic office, appears in a number of Insular gospels and is well developed in the Book of

30 Françoise Henry and G.L. Marsh-Micheli, 'A century of Irish illumination (1070–1170)', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 62C no. 5, 1962, pp. 148–52, pl. 26–27, 43.

Kells on fols. 191v and 193r; the *Pater noster* in Matthew 6:9 is also elaborately decorated on fol. 45r. All three texts have enlarged initials in the Gatianus Gospels (fols. 6r, 54r–v), a late eighth- or early ninth-century manuscript of probably Breton origin whose script, text and decoration suggest insular influence far more readily than does the Royal manuscript.³¹ Within the very different and more limited decorative repertoire of the post-Carolingian minuscule gospel book Royal I.A.XVIII however, these texts are also prominent. The *Magnificat* and *Benedictus* each has a plain initial three and four lines deep respectively on fols. 109 and 110 and the *Pater noster* initial on fol. 21 is four lines deep, drawn in double outline and coloured. The Book of Kells greatly elaborates the insular practice of emphasising St Matthew's listing of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–11) with each Beatitude starting a new line so that the enlarged initial 'B' forms a column. The enlarged and coloured initial 'B' of the Beatitudes in the Royal manuscript, fol. 18, are also arranged beneath each other in a column (unlike continuous text on fol. 27v of the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels). The opening words of Luke 24:1 are decorated, framed and enlarged to fill the page on fol. 285 in the Book of Kells. Here, as elsewhere, Kells is accentuating a text which was already significant in the layout of earlier insular manuscripts: although St Matthew's account of the two Maries visiting Christ's tomb was 'the only one to have great liturgical significance', the version of the story in Luke 24:1, beginning *Una autem sabbati*, is also given prominence in the Hereford and Echternach Gospels, the Book of Dimma, Rawlinson G.167 and the MacRegol Gospels.³² The Breton manuscript Royal I.A.XVIII, fol. 157, also marks Luke 24:1 with an enlarged initial two lines deep.

The late Irish gospel book Harley 1802 accentuates the initials of the *Magnificat*, *Benedictus* and *Pater noster* (fols. 88, 88v, 19), lists the initial 'B' of the Beatitudes in two columns (fol. 16v) and introduces the *Una autem sabbati* text with an initial six lines deep (fol. 125v). It has an elaborate *chi-rho* at Matthew 1:18 and inserts a human face in the 'O' of *Omnes generationes*, fol. 4v, as does the Royal manuscript, fol. 13. Like Royal I.A.XVIII, the Irish manuscript Harley 1802 also sets out the Lucan Genealogy in columnar form (fols. 91v–92) and, as has been discussed, emphasises the opening of Luke 4:2, the text which immediately follows. The Book of Kells, Royal I.A.XVIII and Harley 1802 are obviously very different from each other in many ways, yet, in addition to these broad correspondences in their marking of the gospel text, there is a second link between these three manuscripts which is much more precise.

In its prefatory material the Book of Kells has two incomplete glossaries of Hebrew names in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Christopher Verey and Patrick McGurk have shown that this list of names, a corrupt version of an

31 Joseph M. Heer (ed.), *Evangelium Gatianum* (Paris B. Nat. N. Acqu. NR. 1587), Freiburg, 1910, pp. 10, 93, 94. P. McGurk notes that the phrase used on fol. 85 to introduce St John's Gospel, *item nunc orditur*, is only known in three other possibly Breton books: B.L. Egerton Ms 609, Angers 24(20) and Royal I.A.XVIII. 'The Gospel book in Celtic lands', p. 176.

32 P. McGurk, 'Two notes on the Book of Kells', p. 106.

abbreviated and selective list probably derived from Jerome's *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, is shared by nine other manuscripts, all with insular connections, all but one in an insular hand and all but one dating from before the early ninth century.³³ The late exception is BL Harley 1802 which was written in Armagh in 1138 and not only preserves a number of early insular features in its layout and decoration but has been shown to draw on seventh- and eighth-century Hiberno-Latin commentaries in its marginal glosses.³⁴ The abbreviated list of Hebrew names is already present in the very earliest surviving Insular gospel fragment, the Codex Usserianus Primus, generally thought to be early seventh century and Irish. Dr McGurk has suggested that the curious set of Hebrew names surviving in this group of ten manuscripts 'had probably first been confected for us with the Gospels in Ireland' at the time of the first witness in the early seventh century 'or even earlier'.³⁵ The group's list of Hebrew names for Luke's Gospel has only fifty-nine out of Jerome's [224] eighty-eight items, opens with the name *Augusti* rather than *Aeffeta adaperire*, has variants such as *Pam* for *Ram* and has *salus bona* rather than *suburbana* as the etymology for *Gerasesenorum*. Interestingly, the list of Hebrew names prefixing the Gospel of Luke in the Breton manuscript London, BL Royal I.A.XVIII, fols. 106r–106v, contains all these features.

It is possible to define the links between the list in the Breton manuscript and in the insular group a little more closely. The Lucan list of Hebrew names in the Book of Kells, fols. 26r–26v is spaciouly arranged in one double column showing the names in red and their etymologies in the corresponding position in the second column. The layout is very clear but contains various errors which suggest it must have been derived from an exemplar which was laid out in two double columns to the page. The two earliest manuscripts in the insular group with this particular list of Hebrew names, the seventh-century Ussher Codex and the Book of Durrow, both arrange the list in two sets of double columns. However, Dr McGurk has suggested that peculiarities in the Ussher Codex list make it unlikely it was the archetype for the whole group and, despite the well-known similarities between the prefatory material in the Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells, certain discrepancies indicate that Kells did not take its list of Hebrew names directly from Durrow but from a compilation of prefatory material which

33 C. Verey, T.J. Brown, E. Coatsworth, *The Durham Gospels*, pp. 23–24; P. McGurk, 'The texts at the opening of the book' in *The Book of Kells*, commentary volume to the facsimile of the Book of Kells, (ed.) Peter Fox (Lucerne 1990) 47–51. Dr McGurk is to publish an edition of the Hebrew names in *The Book of Kells*, (ed.) Felicity O'Mahony, forthcoming. The ten mss are: the codex Usserianus primus, Dublin, Trinity College Ms A.4.15 (55); the Book of Durrow; the Book of Kells; the Book of Armagh, TC Ms 52; the Durham Gospels; the Barberini Gospels, Rome, Vatican Ms barb. lat. 570; London, BL Ms Harley 1802; BL Ms Cotton Otho C.V.; the Echternach Gospels, Paris B. N. lat. Ms 9389; Poitiers, B. Mun. Ms 17.

34 Jean Rittmueller, 'The Gospel commentary of Mael Brigte', *Peritia* 2, 1983, pp. 185–214.

35 'The texts at the opening of the book', pp. 48, 58.

‘must have been Irish’.³⁶ From this argument it follows that there must once have been variants of this particular list of Hebrew names in other insular, probably Irish, manuscripts, now lost.

The Breton manuscript, Royal I.A.XVIII, arranges the Lucan list of Hebrew names in one double column on fol. 106r but overleaf, on fol. 106v, the final eight names and their etymologies have to be accommodated in a second double column. It fails to squeeze the long etymology of the name Satan (*sive transgressor adversarius*) into a single line. The Ussher Codex when faced with this problem had let the etymology run over into the column of names; the Book of Durrow simply arranged the etymology in short lines which fit in the proper right-hand column; the Royal manuscript follows the Durrow practice but continues to list new Hebrew names in the left-hand column, thereby disrupting the correspondence between these names and their own etymologies. In other ways the Royal manuscript list comes much closer to Kells. Jerome’s interpretation of the Hebrew name Iona as meaning *columba* or *columba mea* was well known in insular exegesis, but three of the manuscripts in the insular group with the abbreviated version of the Hebrew names have a variant here: *Iori columba mea*.³⁷ The Breton book, Royal I.A.XVIII, fol. 106v shares this curious feature with the Book of Durrow, the Book of Kells and Poitiers B. Mun. Ms 17. Furthermore, the Book of Kells, unlike the Book of Durrow, separates the entries *Elmadadi* and *Er* – and so does the Royal manuscript.

These are correspondences of a specific and idiosyncratic kind. They suggest not a common Early Christian inheritance shared by the Book of Kells and Royal I.A.XVIII in this respect but direct contact between the Breton manuscript or, more probably, one of its exemplars, and an ancient but apparently Irish tradition. This certainly lends interest to the same Breton manuscript’s distinctive highlighting of Luke 4:1 already discussed which hints at what other evidence and common sense also suggest: that there may once have existed Insular gospel books which were closer to the Book of Kells than extant examples in various ways, including, perhaps, stressing the importance of this text and its allusion to the Baptism at the end of the Lucan Genealogy. The style of the decoration of the gospel and the *chi-rho* in the Breton book would indicate that the continental contact with these insular practices had occurred at some considerable time prior to the tenth-century date of Royal I.A.XVIII and had been assimilated into a post-Carolingian decorative and stylistic tradition for a quite different kind of ‘working’ gospel book format. [225]

36 Ibid., p. 58.

37 Paul Meyvaert, ‘The Book of Kells and Iona’, *Art Bulletin* 71, 1989, 9, n. 10.

EXEGESIS AND THE BOOK OF KELLS

The Lucan genealogy*

The Book of Kells was produced in a culture where the use and production of exegesis was long-established and sophisticated. Evidence is not confined to the sources and output of the Venerable Bede (673–735), impressive though this is. Both the early reception date of a wide patristic inheritance in Ireland and the impact of biblical and exegetical concepts and techniques on a large Hiberno-Latin literature have been increasingly recognised in recent years.¹ The difficulty has been to relate this material to an interpretation of the very different medium of insular illuminated gospel books, partly because of the range of scholarly disciplines involved and partly because the attempt to identify pictorial exegesis in the decorative, stylised idiom of early insular manuscript art is far more hazardous than in the art of the Carolingian Renaissance or the late Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform which more fully appropriated the conventions of representational art from the [315] Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity. Since the pioneering work of Patrick McGurk, however, there has been growing awareness of the antiquity of some features of Insular gospel book production too and of the variety of functions the decorative layout of the gospel text can serve, not

* An early draft of this paper was given at the Trinity College Dublin conference on the Book of Kells in September 1992. It discussed pictorial exegesis in the Book of Kells with reference to several examples, but the version for the conference's Proceedings came to focus on one of these examples, the Lucan genealogy. The additional research was first presented at the Patristic Conference in Maynooth in June 1993. I am most grateful to members of the Patristic Conference for their helpful discussion and to Ms Felicity O'Mahony and Dr Bernard Meehan of Trinity College Dublin for their kind permission to publish here a shortened and slightly amended form of the finished paper, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: the Lucan Genealogy', *The Book of Kells*, ed. F. O'Mahony, Aldershot 1994, 344–97.

1 B. Bischoff, 'Turning-points in the history of Latin exegesis in the early Irish Church: AD 650–800', in M. McNamara, (ed.), *Biblical studies. The medieval Irish Contribution*, Dublin 1976, 74–160; J.F. Kelly, 'A catalogue of early medieval Hiberno-Latin biblical commentaries' (I), *Traditio* 44 (1988) 537–71; (II), *Traditio* 45 (1989–90) 393–434; C.D. Wright, 'Hiberno-Latin and Irish-influenced biblical commentaries, florilegia and homily collections' in: F.M. Biggs, T.D. Hill, P.E. Szarmach (eds.), *The Sources of Anglo-Saxon literary culture: a trial version*, Binghampton, NY 1990, 87–123. I am grateful to Damian Bracken for this reference and for helpful discussion of the material.

simply in embellishing the book as a precious liturgical object but in providing a visual structuring of the page, for example by marking punctuation, Eusebian sections and possibly lections. Iconographical studies have shown the possibility of reading a symbolic and expository element, not only in some of the whole-page illustrations in the Book of Kells, but in its abstract ornament and its sacred calligraphy.² Many distinctively insular decorative practices are already evident and, indeed, well-developed in the earliest of the extant illuminated gospels, the late seventh-century Book of Durrow. The Book of Kells, which modern scholars variously date between the mid-eighth – early-ninth century, therefore drew on a long insular tradition of gospel-book production as well as on Early Christian and contemporary continental sources, including a wider range of representational images than any other surviving insular manuscript.

Many questions remain concerning the Book of Kells, including the exact date, place and circumstances of its composition: attempts to spot specific literary ‘sources’ of isolated images and decorative features therefore seem arbitrary, and dogmatic assertions about its meaning cannot be made. The growth in knowledge of early insular literary culture, however, does prompt the attempt to view the layout and decoration of the gospel text in the Book of Kells in the context of how Scripture itself was read. Insular biblical commentaries, compendia and homilies provide evidence of how well known certain patristic texts and rhetorical techniques were and which features evoked particular interest and received further development by insular writers. Bede’s use of the patristic inheritance in his homilies notably illumines a living insular tradition of monastic *lectio divina* which is also evident in contemporary hagiography. The present chapter considers the validity of reading some features of the decoration of the Book of Kells as an adaptation into visual form and an insular idiom of long-established exegetical themes and techniques whose interpretation reveals for an initiated audience the spiritual meaning concealed beneath the literal letter of the sacred text. The approach is here applied to the example of the Lucan genealogy. [316]

In surviving Insular gospel books the tradition for the layout and decoration of Christ’s genealogy in Luke 3:23–38 is far less developed than for the version in Matthew 1:1–17. There is nothing comparable to the ornamented title-page opening of Matthew’s *Liber generationis* which also forms the opening of his gospel and of the gospel text of the whole codex, nor is there any significant parallel to the decorative climax of the sacred *chi-rho* monogram in Matthew 1:18 which habitually follows the Matthean genealogy in insular books. As early as the Book of Durrow, however, the genealogy had been treated as a distinct unit within

2 P. McGurk, *Latin Gospel books from AD 400 to 800*, Les publications de *Scriptorium* 5, Paris 1961; ‘Two notes on the Book of Kells and its relation to other insular Gospel books’, *Scriptorium* 9 (1955) 105–07; S. Lewis, ‘Sacred calligraphy: the chi-rho page in the Book of Kells’ in: *Traditio* 26 (1980) 139–59; Otto Werckmeister, *Irish-Northumbische Buchmalerei des 8. Jh. und monastische Spiritualität*, Berlin 1967; George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel-books 600–800*, London 1987.

Luke's text. The Hebrew names of Christ's ancestors were listed one beneath the other, each preceded by the formula *qui fuit*, meaning 'who was (the son) of X'. The three words of each entry were well spaced forming three vertical columns down the page and the listing could be continued in parallel on the same page to form six columns in all.

As with its treatment of the Matthean genealogy, the Book of Kells both expands established features of the insular tradition and goes beyond it. The columnar listing is retained but there is only one Hebrew name with its accompanying 'qui fuit' on each line so that the list is lavishly spaced over five pages, fols. 200r–202r (Figure 7.1, Figure 7.2, Plate 7.1, Plate 7.2, Plate 7.3). The repeated initial Qs, slightly enlarged or coloured in earlier examples, are in Kells decorated with prodigal variety and richness so that the Lucan genealogy, though not formally framed like the Matthean one in Kells, fols. 29v–31r, nevertheless presents a magnificent counterpart to its layout. Not only are the columns of words enlivened by touches of colour, ornament or calligraphic flourishes, but intercolumnar figures are introduced which have no precedent in surviving Insular gospel books.



Figure 7.1 The Book of Kells. Genealogy of Christ. The Board of Trinity College Dublin.
Fol. 200r.



Figure 7.2 The Book of Kells. Genealogy of Christ. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. Fol. 200v.



Plate 7.1 The Book of Kells. Genealogy of Christ. The Board of Trinity College Dublin.
Fol. 201r.



Plate 7.2 The Book of Kells. Genealogy of Christ. The Board of Trinity College Dublin.
Fol. 201v.

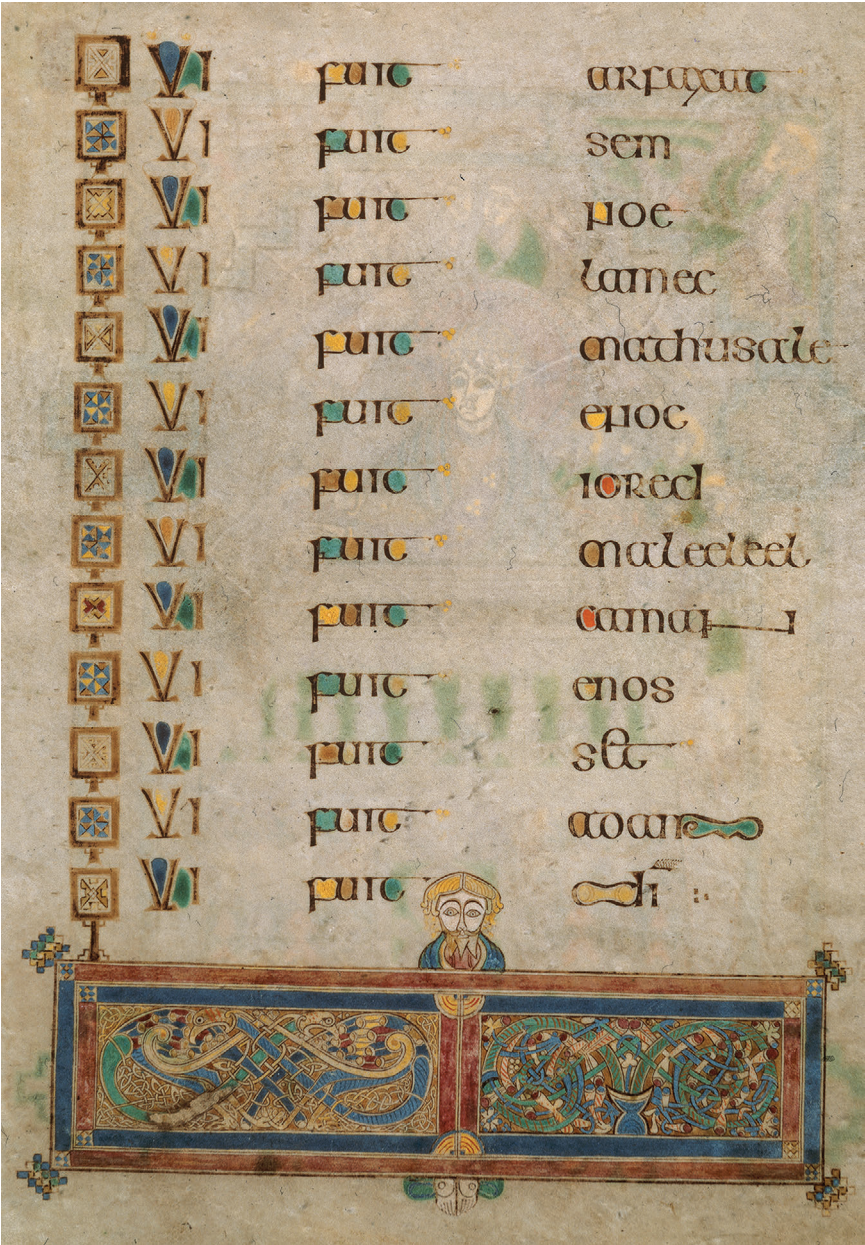


Plate 7.3 The Book of Kells. Genealogy of Christ. The Board of Trinity College Dublin.
Fol. 202r.

Iona

On the third folio of the Lucan genealogy is a curious hybrid figure of a man with arms crossed and contorted and with the lower body made up of interlace and two sets of fin-like projections (Plate 7.1). Because the figure grasps the final letter of the phrase 'Qui fuit' which precedes the Hebrew name Iona (= Jonah), Carl Nordenfalk read it as highlighting the name of 'Iona the prophet', and he speculated that 'it is quite likely that the artist wanted to draw attention to the place where the manuscript was written'.³ The name Iona is not the only one to be so singled out on this folio, however: six birds also grasp the terminal 't' of the phrase preceding the names of six other ancestors in the list and the ambiguous crossed-arms gesture of the fish-man pointing both up and down could be read as indicating those birds which are grouped above and below him. Furthermore, as Nordenfalk himself later noted, the [317] name of the island of Iona was not spelled thus in Hiberno-Saxon texts, so the fish-man could not have been intended as a visual pun on the name of Columba's island monastery. Nevertheless, Nordenfalk ingeniously suggested that 'the Irish scribe, knowing that *Jonas interpretatur columba* from Isidore, *Etymologiae* 7.8.18, was pointing to Jonah's name because it called to mind Columba in whose honour the Book of Kells may have been produced'.⁴

Paul Meyvaert also believes that the raised right hand of the fish-man 'undoubtedly has the purpose of directing our attention to the name Iona: it is a *nota bene* symbol containing a clue to the manuscript's place of origin'. He too cites the patristic exegetical device of translating Hebrew biblical names, a practice popularised by Jerome's *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum* which interprets the name Iona as Columba. An abbreviated and corrupt list of Jerome's Hebrew names survives in a number of Insular gospel books. Dr Meyvaert makes the important observation, however, that the list of Hebrew names appearing in Luke's Gospel in a small sub-group of insular manuscripts including the Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells, does not have the spelling 'Iona' but 'Iori' (sic) *columba mea*.⁵ This would suggest that it was not the Hebrew names list copied out in the prefatory material of the Book of Kells itself that inspired the scribe-illuminator to draw attention to the name of Iona in the Lucan genealogy. Instead, Dr Meyvaert turns to two famous non-biblical Irish applications of the Iona-Columba interpretation.

3 C. Nordenfalk, 'Another look at the Book of Kells' in: F. Piel and J. Traer (eds.), *Festschrift Wolfgang Braunfels*, Tübingen 1977, 275–79, 278.

4 Noted by S. Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy' 139, n. 1.

5 P. Meyvaert, 'The book of Kells and Iona', in *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989) 6–19, 6 n. 4. P. McGurk, 'An edition of the abbreviated and selective set of Hebrew names found in the Book of Kells' in: F. O'Mahony (ed.), *The Book of Kells*, 103–32. To the group of ten mss of insular origin or association which have the selective list of Hebrew names may be added BL Royal MS. I.A.XVIII which shares with the Book of Durrow, the Book of Kells and Poitiers B.Mun. MS 17 the further distinction of the *Iori columba mea* entry: see J. O'Reilly, 'The Book of Kells and two Breton Gospel books' in: C. Laurent and H. Davis (ed.), *Irlande et Bretagne*, Rennes 1994, 217–25.

In 615 Columbanus wrote, 'I am called Jonah in Hebrew, Peristera in Greek and Columba in Latin'; in correspondence he several times used the Hebrew name Iona of himself. Similarly, in the second preface to the *Vita Columbae* written before 700, Adomnán, ninth abbot of the island monastery of Iona noted 'what is pronounced *iona* in Hebrew and what Greek calls *peristera* and what in Latin is named *columba*, means one and the same thing'. Adomnán comments at length on the appropriateness of this name given to St Columba. Dr Meyvaert observes: 'From this evidence one can safely conclude that the scribe-illuminator is subtly indicating that the great name of Columba lies [318] concealed on fol. 201r of the Book of Kells' and that the manuscript 'can only have been produced in Columban territory'.⁶

Northumbria is excluded by this definition because the cult of Columba had been superseded there following the controversy over the dating of Easter.⁷ Both Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Life* of Wilfrid show the Columban monks of Lindisfarne (which had been founded from Iona in the 630s) losing the debate at the Synod of Whitby in 664 about the relative authority of St Columba and St Peter.

Columba

One difficulty with this interpretation of the significance of the fish-man figure in the Book of Kells is that the play on the Hebrew name Iona/Jonah and its Latin version Columba was by no means confined to Adomnán's account of St Columba but was widely used in exegesis to describe St Peter, whose original name was Simon Bar-Jonah. Moreover the context for such discussion was exegesis of Matthew 16:15–19, the Petrine text which also figured largely in the insular literature of the Paschal controversy. The Hiberno-Latin pseudo-Jerome says of Peter's name BarJonah, *id est, filius Iona, id est columba*; a commentary on Matthew from the eighth-century circle of Virgil of Salzburg has, *Petrus vocatur filius columbae quia iona columba interpretatur acsi dixisset filius sancti Spiritus est, quasi in columba Spiritus venit*.⁸ Isidore's *Etymologiae*, well-known to Irish commentators, says *Simon Bar-iona in lingua nostra sonat filius columbae, et est nomen Syrum pariter et Hebraeum. Bar quippe Syra lingua filius, Iona Hebraice columba; utroque sermone dicitur Bar-iona*.⁹ In his *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum* Jerome briefly notes the meaning of the name Iona when it appears in Luke's Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Jonah: *Iona columba* or *Iona columba vel dolens*. In the section of St Matthew's Gospel however, Jerome comments more fully on Peter's original name: *Bariona filius*

6 Ibid., 9 n. 10–12, quoting G.S.M. Walker (ed.), *Sancti Columbani Opera, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae II*, Dublin 1970, 2, 54 and A. Anderson and M.O. Anderson (eds.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, Edinburgh 1961, revised M.O. Anderson, Oxford 1991, 2–4.

7 'The Book of Kells and Iona' 9–10 n. 14–16.

8 *Expositio in IV evangelia*, PL. 30, 554; J.F. Kelly, 'Irish monks and the See of St Peter' in: *Monastic Studies* 14 (1983) 207–23, 217.

9 *Etymologiae* I, Bk. 7, 9:4.

columbae. Syrum est pariter hebraeum. Bar quippe lingua Syra filius, et iona columba utroque sermone dicitur. Furthermore, in his gospel commentary on Matthew, which was extremely influential with Irish exegetes, Jerome applies this interpretation of names to the Petrine text in which Christ says, 'Blessed are you Simon Bar-Iona' (Matthew 16:17). Jerome explains that Simon's acclamation of Christ in the preceding verse was inspired by the Holy Spirit, whose [319] son he was, as is shown in his name: the Holy Spirit is signified by a dove and *siquidem Bar Iona in lingua nostra sonat filius columbae*.¹⁰

If this exegetical tradition suggests that the fish-man figure on fol. 201r of the Book of Kells cannot, by itself, be read exclusively as a coded allusion to St Columba, does it have any significance or offer any comment on the text it decorates?

In an early commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, c. 709–716, Bede specifically refers to Jerome's list of Hebrew names and says, 'Wherever the sacred Scriptures give the names of things or persons with an interpretation, it certainly indicates that a more sacred sense is contained in them [. . .] Thus blessed Peter, on account of the grace of the same Spirit, was called Bar-iona, that is son of the dove'.¹¹ Bede's homily on the Chair of St Peter, which focuses on the Petrine commission in Matthew 16, is of particular interest here in that it offers a number of parallels with Adomnán's account of St Columba. Bede says that the name *Simon Bar-Iona*, meaning *filius columbae* in Latin, properly glorifies this perfect confessor of Christ's name because he was divinely inspired to recognise Christ's true identity with the acclamation, 'Thou art Christ, the son of the living God' (Matthew 16:16). He was rightly called the son of a dove because the dove is a simple creature and *Simon Bar-Iona* followed the Lord with pious simplicity mindful of the command that the Lord's followers be prudent as serpents and simple as doves (Matthew 10:6). Furthermore, adds Bede, because the Holy Spirit descended on the Lord at his Baptism in the form of a dove, one who is full of spiritual grace may properly be given the name 'son of a dove' or 'son of the Holy Spirit'.¹²

Similarly, Adomnán had drawn upon the patristic tradition of translating the Hebrew name Iona as Columba and also sought the significance of that divinely given name in the authority of the gospel. Like Bede, he refers both to the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at Christ's Baptism and to the exhortation in Matthew 10:6 that the simplicity and innocence of the dove be taken as a model for discipleship:

Therefore a simple and innocent person (Columba) also was rightly called by this name, since he with dove-like disposition offered to the Holy Spirit a dwelling in himself.¹³

10 *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, CCSL 72, 140, 146, 124, 135. *Commentariorum in Matheum*, CCSL 77, 141.

11 *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, CCSL 121, 28; L.T. Martin (trans.), *The Venerable Bede. Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Kalamazoo 1989, 52–53.

12 *Opera homiletica*, CCSL 122, 143–44.

13 *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, 4–5.

The play on the forms of Columba's name does not simply allow Adomnán to display his erudition and *urbanitas*.¹⁴ The power of Adomnán's [320] claims here lies in his use of language traditionally used to exalt the discipleship of the Prince of the Apostles, not in order to lessen Peter's glory (the Columban monks at Whitby did not deny Christ's commission to St Peter), but to reveal Columba too as 'a man very dear to God and of high merit in his sight' on whom the grace of the Holy Spirit was poured out abundantly and in an incomparable manner.¹⁵

In a very different rhetorical register and nearly a century earlier, Columbanus had also assumed contemporary familiarity with the traditional exegetical interpretation of Iona-Columba when he frequently used it of his own name, even calling himself *Bar-iona* in a letter to Gregory I. This has recently been described as 'self-righteous' and 'intentionally offensive': 'the Irishman could hardly have expected a Pope to find his claim to be Bar-iona either clever or amusing'.¹⁶ It does, however, point to a wider application of the Iona-Columba exegesis than that encountered so far and one which may well have some relevance in the attempt to read the fish-man symbol in the Book of Kells.

Columba and its various forms and diminutives – Colum, Colman and Columban – was 'very common among the Irish saints'¹⁷ and exegesis of the Petrine and related texts makes it clear that *all* the faithful are called to be *columbae* or doves because at their Baptism they are filled with the Holy Spirit (albeit each according to his capacity). Whereas Bede and Adomnán show St Peter and St Columba respectively to have been very full vessels of the Holy Spirit, Columbanus in describing himself immediately follows the phrase *ego Bar-iona* with the self-deprecatory words *vilis Columba* and elsewhere in his correspondence repeatedly refers to himself as *Columba peccator*. Particularly when understood in the context of his idiosyncratic use of the authorial humility topos,¹⁸ Columbanus seems to be saying that as a member of the Church he is a dove, his very name proclaims it, though he is a small and wretched one; far from abrogating the authority of *Simon Bar-iona* he presumes to offer advice and even admonition to Popes Gregory I and Boniface IV only in the interests of the Church's unity which St Peter represents. In exegetical parlance – and his letter of 600 is addressed to a great exegete whom he revered – unity was a very dove-like preoccupation.

As early as Cyprian's *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, which was well-known to insular commentators, the nature of the dove is allegorically expounded. The reason why the Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove is because doves are without rancour or bitterness, they fly in formation, [321] assemble and eat in one house, and are, in short, an image of unity and concord whose example the Church must follow, 'that

14 J.M. Picard, 'The purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', in *Peritia* I (1982) 176–77.

15 *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, 209.

16 J.F. Kelly, 'The letter of Columbanus to Gregory the Great' in *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 33, Rome 1991, 216, 218.

17 *Sancti Columbani opera*, xii n. 3.

18 M. Lapidge, 'Columbanus and the Antiphony of Bangor', in *Peritia* 4 (1985) 107–08.

we may imitate the doves in our love for the brethren'. In the second version of the text, Cyprian quotes the Petrine commission in Matthew 16 to demonstrate that, although after the Resurrection the other apostles also received the Spirit and shared in Peter's power, nevertheless 'It is on one man Christ builds his Church [. . .] in order to show that the Church of Christ is unique. Indeed this oneness is figured in the Cantic of Canticles when the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Lord's name, says, "One is my dove, my perfect one"'.¹⁹ This classic text (Canticles 6:8) is echoed in the very interpretation of the Hebrew name Iona not simply as *Columba* but as *Columba mea* in Jerome's list of the Hebrew names used in Luke.

Bede, who draws on Cyprian and the Song of Songs in his homily on the Chair of Peter, explains that although the same office is committed to the whole Church in her bishops and priests, the special way in which Peter was blessed and given the keys in Matthew 16:17–19 represented the unity of faith and fellowship of all believers. Playing on the interpretation of the name *Bar-iona* as *filius columbae*, Bede urges: 'if we imitate Peter's example [. . .] we also will be capable of being called blessed [. . .] on account of the gift of virtues we have received from the Lord, we will be called "sons of a dove" and Christ himself, rejoicing with us in the spiritual progress of our souls, will say, "How beautiful you are [. . .] your eyes are those of doves"' (Canticles 4:1).²⁰

Baptism

The dove, a vessel or dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, was a familiar image of the Church or the soul and could thus be applied to the particular examples of St Peter, Columba or Columbanus. Exegesis on the dove was not peculiar to exegesis of the Petrine text in Matthew 16 or to the traditional interpretation of Iona as Columba, however, but was found in two other important contexts: commentaries on the gospel accounts of Christ's Baptism and catechetical and mystagogical works on the sacrament of Baptism. Ambrose's *De Mysteriis*, for example, links together the account of the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at Christ's Baptism, the injunction of Matthew 10:6 'be simple as doves' (which is directly applied to those who are baptised) [322] and the words of Canticles 4:1, addressed by Christ to the pure soul of those regenerated in Baptism: 'How beautiful you are [. . .] your eyes are those of doves'.²¹ This is one of a number of quotations about doves in the Song of Songs cited by Bede in a homily expounding Christ's Baptism and the sacrament it prefigured. Elsewhere he notes that the Holy Spirit by descending at Christ's Baptism as a dove 'does not represent merely its own innocence and sim-

19 Cyprian, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate* CCL 3, 255–56, 252, note on authenticity of Primacy Text, 244–45. This work was used in the insular paschal controversy, e.g. Cumman's letter, M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (eds.), *De controversia paschali*, Toronto 1988, 78–79 n. 151.

20 *Opera homiletica* CCL 122, 146–47; L.T. Martin and D. Hurst (trans.), *Bede the Venerable. Homilies on the Gospels I*, Kalamazoo 1991, 204.

21 B. Botte (ed.), *Ambroise de Milan. Des sacrements. Des mystères*, SC 25, 168–76.

plicity, or that of Him on whom it descended, but likewise that of those who think of Him “in goodness and seek him in simplicity of heart” [Wisdom 1:1]. The Lord himself says in praise of the piety that they share with one accord [. . .] granted by a spiritual grace: “One is my dove” [Canticles 6:8] [. . .] The Church is appropriately given the name “the one dove of Christ” [. . .] for undoubtedly it is not because of her own merits, but because of a gift of spiritual grace she has received, that she is gathered into the unity of the Christian faith from many nations’.²²

Any discussion of whether this exegetical chain of texts concerning the dove has any relevance to an interpretation of the hybrid figure apparently drawing attention to the name Iona on fol. 201r in the Book of Kells needs now to view both this exegesis and the figure of the fish-man in the context of the whole folio and in the larger decorated unit of text of which fol. 201r forms a part. Two practical questions also need to be addressed: why is the fish-man accompanied by six birds to which he appears to be pointing? And why are these figures placed within the Lucan text of Christ’s genealogy?

It is clear from the traditions briefly sketched here that the dove was universally regarded as an image of the baptised Christian soul or of the Church collectively, filled with the Holy Spirit. The key text in the exegetical chain and the unambiguous reason why the dove was so widely used as the image of the Holy Spirit filling the soul or the Church is that at Christ’s own Baptism the Holy Spirit descended *in specie columbae*. This reason is quoted by Adomnán in the very next sentence after his play on Iona-Columba and forms the basis of his explanation of the suitability of the name Columba for one who ‘with dove-like disposition offered to the Holy Spirit a dwelling in himself’. If, as seems likely, the Book of Kells was produced in a Columban monastery, the detail of the hybrid figure alongside the name of Iona would doubtless have had a particular significance but it could not have been an exclusive allusion to St Columba since all the baptised are called to be doves, to become the dwelling-place or temple of the Holy Spirit. At their Baptism and post-baptismal Confirmation the faithful are anointed with oil and chrism to signify their participation in Christ’s spiritual [323] anointing with the Holy Spirit at his Incarnation, which was proclaimed at his Baptism by the descent of the dove and in the words of the Father, ‘This is my beloved son’. In St Luke’s Gospel alone the account of Christ’s Baptism is immediately followed by His genealogy. In the Book of Kells the two lines of text concluding the Lucan baptism narrative are inscribed at the top of fol. 200r above the opening of the genealogy (Figure 7.1). The top line bears the words of the Father, *tu es filius meus dilectus*. The list of Christ’s human ancestors thus immediately follows the revelation of his divine Sonship at his Baptism, a point also stressed at the end of the genealogy where Christ’s earthly ancestors are traced back to Adam ‘who was the son of God’.

Patristic and insular commentators were responsive to the theological implications of Luke’s genealogy and its context. Following St Ambrose, an eighth-century

22 *Opera homiletica*, CCSL 122, 107–08; *Homilies on the Gospels*, I 151–52.

Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke's Gospel notes that the account of Christ's genealogy is placed after the account of the Baptism in order to demonstrate that God is Father not only of Christ but of all Christians through Baptism.²³ Bede's commentary on Luke's Gospel shows that the real significance of the coming of the dove at Christ's Baptism was its descent into his body, the Church; thus those who are baptised receive the Holy Spirit and become the sons of God.²⁴

In the same gospel commentary and in the context of discussing the importance of the number seven in Luke's listing of the seventy-seven generations of Christ's ancestors, Bede refers to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which Isaiah prophesied would descend on the Messiah (Is 11:2–3). Allusion to Isaiah's prophecy in the context of Baptism was a patristic commonplace. It is used by Ambrose, for example, to explain that the faithful also receive the spiritual seal of these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit at their own post-baptismal anointing with chrism at which they participate in Christ's anointing.²⁵ In his homily expounding Christ's Baptism Bede shows how the sevenfold nature of the dove, allegorically revealed in the Song of Songs, exemplifies the seven types of virtue [324] necessary to the life of the baptised: 'And this is rightly done because the grace of the Holy Spirit, who descended as a dove, is sevenfold'.²⁶ The eighth-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke's Gospel (which was influenced by Ambrose's Lucan commentary) interprets the evangelist's description of Jesus after his Baptism 'full of the Holy Spirit' as meaning the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit 'and of this fulness have we all received'.²⁷

It has been seen that St Luke's Gospel uniquely connects Christ's Baptism and his genealogy and that the exegetical tradition emphasised both Christ's divine Sonship, made known in the words of the Father and the descent of the dove at his Baptism, and his human ancestry revealed in the genealogy. Commentators further noted the allusion of the dove to the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church whose earthly members, reborn in Baptism, become sons of God. Related themes which also exist in other contexts were drawn into Ambrose's magisterial treatment of the Lucan Baptism and Genealogy: the exposition of the nature of the dove as an image of the Church or the individual soul filled with the Holy Spirit and the application of this image of the dove to all the faithful who in their Baptism and post-baptismal

23 J.F. Kelly, editor of the Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke, Cod. Vind. lat. 997, c. 780–85 (CCSL 108c), notes its dependence on Bede's Lucan commentary, c. 709–16, and other evidence of the early familiarity of Irish commentators with some of Bede's works: 'To study Hiberno-Latin exegesis without reference to Bede is to ignore not only an important source for the Irish exegetes, but also a part of the tradition in which they stood'; Bede's own use of earlier Hiberno-Latin works is also noted: 'Bede and Hiberno-Latin exegesis' in: P. Szarmach (ed.), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, Kalamazoo 1986; J. Kelly, 'The Hiberno-Latin study of the Gospel of Luke', in M. McNamara (ed.), *Biblical Studies. The medieval Irish contribution* (note 1 supra), 10–29.

24 Bede, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, CCSL 120, 84; cf. Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, CCSL 14, 81–82.

25 *De sacramentis*, SC 25, 74–75.

26 *Opera homiletica*, CCSL 122, 86.

27 *Scriptores Hiberniae minores*, CCSL 108C, 29.

confirmatory anointing with chrism share in Christ's anointing with the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the patristic interpretation of the Hebrew name Iona as *columba* had long been familiar in insular monastic culture and, in the *Life of Columba*, had found early expression in connection with a number of the exegetical themes itemised here. Seen from the perspective of exegesis on Luke's text and its themes, therefore, the possibility that the hybrid figure on fol. 201r in the Book of Kells may be a witty visual play on the Hebrew name Iona and its Latin meaning *columba* or dove, seems strengthened rather than diminished by his gnomic gestures. He is pointing both upwards and downwards, linking him to the six birds grouped directly above and below so that the whole column of figures may be read as seven 'doves' in all (Plate 7.1). A number of puzzles remain. Why, for example, is the central 'dove' depicted as half-man, half-fish? Is this just incidental, an idiosyncratic drollery, or is it integral to the meaning of the page suggested here?

The sign of Jonah

Françoise Henry's observation that the Hebrew name Iona in Luke's genealogy had itself 'probably suggested the fish-human figure' on fol. 201²⁸ and Paul Meyvaert's comment that 'There may be a playful allusion [325] here to Jonah and his whale'²⁹ tacitly depend on conflating Christ's ancestor Iona (about whom nothing is known) with the prophet Iona who was often depicted as a half-length figure emerging from the jaws of the whale or sea monster in early Christian art. In early Irish monastic circles the Hebrew name Iona certainly evoked the prophet of that name. Using word-play on his own name, Columbanus frequently and unambiguously likened himself to the prophet Jonah and his shipwreck, and Adomnán in interpreting St Columba's name says he 'received the same name as the prophet Jonah'.³⁰ The scriptural and exegetical associations of the prophet Jonah may, therefore, have some significance in interpreting the fish-man figure in the Book of Kells.

Jonah was cited by Christ in Matthew 12:39–40; 16:4 and Luke 11:29–30 as the sign of the Son of Man, expanded in Matthew's version to a specific image of Christ's own death and Resurrection. Because the faithful sacramentally participate in Christ's death and Resurrection at their descent into the waters of baptism, from which ritual death they emerge to a new life, they too were in early exegesis likened to Jonah and his deliverance from the whale. In his commentary on the Book of Jonah, Jerome refers to Christ's Baptism to explain that the prophet's name means *columba* because *Spiritus Sanctus in specie columbae descendit*. He directly links Jonah's mission to the Ninevites with the risen Christ's injunction to his disciples to baptise all in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).³¹

28 F. Henry, *The Book of Kells*, London 1974, 200 and n. 95.

29 'The Book of Kells and Iona' (note 5 supra), 6.

30 *Sancti Columbani opera* 19, 35, 55; *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, 3.

31 *Commentarium in Ionam prophetam*, CCSL 76, 380, 404.

Royal priesthood

Genealogy has an extremely important function in both the Old and New Testaments:

The very interest in ancestry reflects Israel's tribal origins [. . .] Besides establishing identity, biblical genealogies are sometimes used to undergird status, especially for the offices of king and priest where lineage is important [. . .] to structure history into epochs and to authenticate a line of (cultic) office holders.³²

The two versions of Christ's genealogy in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke received extensive exposition in patristic commentaries but were of particular interest for a clerical caste within barbarian society who shared many of the assumptions and techniques of the authors of biblical genealogies. Donnchadh Ó Corráin has shown that early Irish [326] churchmen themselves produced a vast corpus of genealogical material, shaped for ecclesiastical and political purposes.³³

On the same page as the Iona figure in the Book of Kells is the name of Christ's ancestor David. Ambrose's Lucan commentary, followed by insular exegetes, explains that in Matthew's genealogy the descent is through David's son and royal heir, Solomon, but in Luke's version the sacerdotal line is traced through another of David's sons, Nathan.³⁴ Christ as a member of the royal house of Judah was not in the direct descent of the priestly tribe of Aaron (Num 3:3,10; Hebrews 7:14), but St Luke is at pains to explain that the Virgin Mary was the cousin of John the Baptist's mother, Elizabeth, who was 'of the daughters of Aaron' (Luke 1:5) and that Elizabeth's husband, the priest Zacharias, was descended through Abia from Aaron. Insular commentators document other examples of such links

32 R.E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, London 1977, 65.

33 D. Ó Corráin, 'Irish origin legends and genealogy: recurrent aetiologies' in: T. Nybey, I. Pio, P. Sorensen, A. Trommer (eds.), *History and heroic tale*, Odense 1985, 51–96; K. McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in early Irish Literature*, Maynooth 1991, 233–244.

34 Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, I, CCL 14, 82–83; cf. Bede, In *Lucae evangelium expositio* CCL 120, 89–90. Also in the Hiberno-Latin tradition, e.g. in the commentary on the Matthean genealogy in Munich, Clm. 6233, fol. 22v, c. 770–80, and the commentary on the Lucan genealogy in the eighth-century Irish 'Reference Bible', Paris, B.N. lat. 11561, fol. 164v and Munich, Clm. 14277, fol. 253r. I am most grateful to Dr Seán Connolly, who is editing the 'Reference Bible' New Testament, for making his transcripts of the genealogical material in these unpublished mss. available to me. Ambrose is the most important patristic source for the commentary on Luke in the Reference Bible but 'Ambrose's own source, Origen's Homilies on Luke, is known to the Irish exegete, in Latin translation, and the Alexandrian is cited by name', J.F. Kelly, 'Das Bibelwerk, organization und Quellenanalyse of the New Testament section' in: P. Ni Chatháin and M. Richter (eds.), *Irland und die Christenheit* (Stuttgart 1987) 113–23, 116. The contrast in Christ's descent traced through Solomon and Nathan was also perpetuated through the 'Monarchan' prologues prefacing Insular gospel books, including the Book of Kells. J. Chapman, *Early History of the Vulgate Gospels*, Oxford 1908, 230.

by intermarriage between the royal and priestly lines in order to show that Christ belongs in the flesh to both tribes and that in his assumed humanity He has the person of priest and king.³⁵

The eighth-century Irish Reference Bible describes how Aaron, under the Law, was anointed to his office and thus became the first messias or christus. He is compared with Christ, the Anointed One, who was anointed at his Incarnation, however, not physically with oil or chrism like Aaron, but invisibly by the Holy Spirit as 'a priest for ever, according [327] to the order of Melchisedech' and also as a prophet and a king. It is this spiritual anointing which was made manifest at Christ's Baptism when the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove to the body of Christ, his Church. In this sense, all the baptised when anointed with chrism through which they sacramentally share in Christ's anointing are called to be prophets, priests and kings, as the liturgy also makes evident.³⁶

There were other important factors in the particular association of Luke's Gospel with Christ's (and therefore with the Church's) royal priesthood. Luke's account of the Incarnation is symbolically prefaced by the scene of Zacharias, a priest of the Old Covenant, making an offering at the altar in the Temple at Jerusalem. In Carolingian and late Anglo-Saxon gospel books it is this scene, rather than the Annunciation, which is distinguished by its depiction in the spandrels or the initial of the gospel *incipit*. In the illustrations of the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels Zacharias' symbolic function is acknowledged in his being paired with Aaron.³⁷ Following Ambrose, Bede notes that the appearance of an angel beside the altar of Zacharias' offering was to proclaim 'the coming of the true and eternal High Priest who would be the true sacrificial offering for the salvation of the whole world'.³⁸

Ambrose in turn, like Origen before him, was drawing on the exegesis already well developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews which shows how Christ

35 *Ex dictis sancti Hieronimi* (Munich, Clm. 14426), CCSL 108B, 229–230 and Bede, *Opera homiletica*, CCSL 122, 19–20 for royal and priestly inter-marriage.

36 From commentary on Matthean genealogy, Paris B.N. lat 11561, fol. 138r, Munich Clm. 14277, fol. 219v. Angers 55 also gives other scriptural references for Christ's threefold anointing which is related to his Baptism and his title in the *tres linguae sacrae*. *Christus, Unctus, Messias*: CCSL 108B, 147–48. All three features are related in a commentary on the Incarnation in Verona, Bibl. Capit. LXVII (64), fol. 42r quoted by J.F. Kelly, 'The Hiberno-Latin study of the gospel of Luke' (note 23 supra) 21–22. See also Ambrose, *De sacramentis*, CCSL 73, 74–75. Isidore of Seville relates Aaron's priestly anointing to the anointing of Christ and of all the members of the Church as priests and kings, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, CCSL 113, 106.

37 Florence, bibl. Medicea-Laurentiana (Plut. I, 56). C. Ceccheli, G. Furlani, M. Salmi (eds.), *The Rabbula Gospels*, Oltun and Lausanne 1959, Canon I, fol. 3v, pl. 9.2. After Aaron and Zacharias the Annunciation follows, accompanied by the O.T. priest Samuel with the oil for royal anointing, then Christ's Baptism, with the enthroned figures of David and Solomon. Early western representations of Zacharias at the altar reviewed by R. Walker, 'Illustrations of the Priscillian prologues in Gospel mss. of the Carolingian Ada school', in *Art Bulletin* 30 (1948) 1–10; W. Koehler, 'An illustrated Evangelistary of the Ada school and its model' in: *Jnl. Warburg and Courtauld Inst.* 15 (1952) 48–66.

38 *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, CCSL 120, 24; cf. Bede, *Homelia II*, 19. CCSL 122, 318–27, 323.

was called by God to be the new High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary superseding the Aaronic priesthood and the sacrifices of the Old Covenant and of the earthly tabernacle. The Epistle repeatedly cites [328] Christ's fulfilment of the Messianic prophecy from Psalm 109:4, 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedech' (Hebrews 5:6; 10; 6:20; 7:2,17). Melchisedech does not feature in Luke's list of Christ's ancestors because this mysterious priest-king was 'without father, without mother, without genealogy' (Hebrews 7:3). In Hebrews, however, the first of the repeated acclamations of Christ as 'Thou are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedech' is directly coupled with another prophetic text: 'Thou art my son: this day have I begotten thee' (Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 5:5-6). Commentators, including Ambrose's work on Luke's Gospel, regularly noted the fulfilment of this prophecy in the gospel accounts of Christ's Baptism when the Psalm words are alluded to in the proclamation of his divine Sonship. Exegesis on St Luke's combined account of Christ's Baptism and his priestly genealogy therefore regularly makes substantial use of the Epistle to the Hebrews' revelation of Christ as the divinely appointed great High Priest 'after the order of Melchisedech'. The image carried a further and widely known allusion to Christ's priesthood and sacrifice because the priest-king Melchisedech had offered bread and wine to Abraham (Genesis 14:18), a standard type of prefiguring of the Eucharist which was frequently cited in commentaries on the Last Supper and on the Eucharist and recalled in the Roman Canon of the Mass.

The twelfth-century Mosan Floreffe Bible (London, BL Add. MS 17738) sets out the major themes of this exegesis in pictorial form at the beginning of St Luke's Gospel at the place reserved in earlier gospel books for a literal illustration of Luke's account of Zacharias at the altar in the Temple.³⁹ On the double-columned page on fol. 187 the picture is positioned alongside the literal text of Luke's account of Zacharias but, with the aid of inscriptions, provides a detailed comment on its underlying spiritual meaning (Figure 7.3). St Luke stands holding an emblem of his evangelist symbol, the winged calf, immediately beside a scene of the sacrifice of a calf on an altar by a priest of the Old Covenant. This blood sacrifice is superseded by the Crucifixion shown in the upper register of the picture and on the same central axis as the sacrificial altar below. The lance thrust which pierces Christ's side on the Cross parallels the knife thrust to the sacrificial calf on the altar below, which, under the Old Covenant, had to be made to repeated victims in expiation for sin. That Christ's Passion is to be seen as the priestly sacrifice of the New Covenant is made unambiguously clear by the addition of portrait busts with banderoles. King David quotes from his own Psalm 109: 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech', and St Paul, the presumed author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, quotes from 9:12: 'But by his own blood He entered once into the holy place'. The inscription over the

39 G.W.H. Lampe (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 2, Cambridge 1969, pl. 31.



Figure 7.3 Mosan Floreffe Bible. © The British Library Board. Add MS 17738, fol. 187.

sanctuary arch which encloses the entire picture directly relates of Christ and the sacrificial calf. [329]

The Book of Kells has no such didactic intent: its illustration will not teach what is not already known. Instead of attaching a coherent centralised design to the narrative of Zacharias in Luke 1 providing a clear commentary on it, the Kells artist has added enigmatic and apparently unconnected figures to the margins of a genealogy where they may be read by the casual eye as simply decorating or animating the page. But viewed in the context of the exegetical tradition just outlined they may also be seen as a series of pictorial cues both recalling and prompting a meditative reading of a mysterious text, namely the list of Hebrew names. Similarly, the author of the Hiberno-Latin commentary on Matthew's Gospel in Munich, Clm 6233, uses the bare list of Hebrew names and their etymologies as a series of hooks on which to hang exegetical chains of texts. Their precise relevance to the particular names against which they are positioned varies considerably – sometimes it is very close, sometimes it seems slight, forced or non-existent – but they are united

in providing a series of insights into the nature of Christ within the framework of a genealogy whose very function is to elucidate that identity.⁴⁰

On fol. 201v in Kells a figure with a chalice is placed over the name of Abraham (Plate 7.2). At the foot of the page is a small winged calf placed vertically, as in the evangelist symbol of Luke on fol. 27v, where a cross appears in its halo. The patristic tradition of associating St Luke and his symbolic calf with the Passion and priesthood of Christ was very familiar in Hiberno-Latin exegesis on the four evangelists.⁴¹ Ambrose refers to the suitability of the calf as the symbol of St Luke precisely in his discussion of the Lucan genealogy which reveals Christ as a priest for ever ‘according to the order of Melchisedech’: Ambrose observes that the calf always points to this sacerdotal mystery.⁴² In Kells the calf is depicted with its back to the names of three of Christ’s ancestors (Eber, Sala and Cainan) who merit no particular comment in exegesis. More important, perhaps, in explaining the calf’s position on the page, is the fact that it is directly facing the ornament at the end of the genealogy on the facing page and that the calf’s legs are outstretched so that its whole body forms a kind of bracket exactly spanning the depth of that decorative panel and visually relating the two. [330]

The panel on fol. 202r is formed by entwined peacocks and a vine-scroll stemming from a chalice and partly conceals a bearded figure standing behind it (Plate 7.3). The idea that this is not simply a decorative endpiece but also carries the standard early Christian allusions of the motif to the Eucharist is strengthened by comparison with the decorative panel marking the *breves causae* of Luke which begins on fol. 19v with the words *Zachariae sacerdoti*. The opening letters, *Zacha*, clouded by ornament and enlarged on a panel to fill the width of the page, are ingeniously formed from an inhabited vine-scroll stemming horizontally along the panel from a chalice, so that an allusion to the eucharistic sacrifice of the new High Priest may be discerned, concealed in Zacharias’ name.

The Temple

Ambrose’s commentary on St Luke’s Gospel contrasts the Aaronic priesthood represented by Zacharias with the eternal priest of whom it is said: ‘Thou art a priest for ever’. Ambrose expounds this text as referring to ‘the priest who is to come, whose sacrifice would not be like others, for he would not offer sacrifice for us in a temple made with human hands but he would offer propitiation for our

40 The Hebrew names in Matthew 1:4–5, for example, prompt succinct allusion to biblical texts on the Crucifixion as exaltation (linking John 12:32 and Philippians 2:8–11), on the body of Christ as the prophesied new sacrifice for remission of sin, on the Church drawn from the Gentiles and on Christ’s royal and priestly lineage ‘after the order of Melchisedech’.

41 R. McNally, ‘The Evangelists in the Hiberno-Latin tradition’ in: A. Hiersemann (ed.), *Festschrift Bernhard Bischoff*, Stuttgart 1971, 111–22.

42 CCSL 14, 83; cf. 5: in the prologue dealing with the priest Zacharias Ambrose also speaks of the calf as the symbol of Luke’s Gospel which begins with a priest and ends with a victim.

sins in the temple of his body'.⁴³ This draws heavily on the Epistle to the Hebrews ch. 9 which contrasts the blood sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood with Christ's redemptive single sacrifice of his own blood. The 'former tabernacle' is to be superseded by 'a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation', as the new 'High Priest, Jesus is not entered into the [Holy of] Holies made with hands, the pattern of the true, but into Heaven itself, that He may appear now in the presence of God for us' (Hebrews 9:11, 24). But Ambrose links the Hebrews text to another important scriptural chain.

The earliest Christian preachers declared that the Lord who created heaven and earth 'dwells not in temples made with hands' (Acts 17:24, 7:48). To the Jews who demanded that Jesus give them some sign of the divine authority by which He had cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem, He replied: 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up'. They understood this literally. 'But he spoke of the temple of his body' (John 2:19–22). During his trial before the chief priests his accusers said, 'We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands' (Mark 14:58; Matthew 26:61). The Jews failed to discern the spiritual fulfilment of his prophecy in the Crucifixion and Resurrection: 'Thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days will rebuild it, save thy own self. If thou be the son of God, come down from the cross' (Matthew 27:40; Mark 15:29). [331]

Ambrose's contrast of the Old Covenant priesthood represented by Zacharias with 'the priest who is to come' depends on the Epistle to the Hebrews, some of whose themes have been traced here in the decoration of the last double-opening of Jesus's priestly genealogy in the Book of Kells, fols. 201v–202r. But Ambrose's contrast of the Old Covenant sacrifice in the 'temple made with human hands' with the new priest's offering of 'propitiation for our sins in the temple of his body' also draws on the chain of gospel texts, centred on John 2:19–22, which identify the new temple, the place of the divine presence, as the human body of Jesus.

Furthermore, Ambrose applies the image of the Temple not only to the incarnate body of Jesus but to the Church. Commenting on Luke's account of the Baptism, which points to the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church at Pentecost, Ambrose pictures the birth, growth, composition and calling of the Church through the image of the Temple building, drawing on a chain of scriptural texts. He describes the Temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem as the type of the Church built by God and quotes Psalm 126:1: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it'. In particular he comments on the constituent phrases of two key texts in the chain. He calls on the faithful to be 'as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices' (I Peter 2:5) and pictures this spiritual house as 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building framed together grows into a temple' (Ephesians 2:20–21).

43 Op. cit. 17.

Ambrose's interpretation of the Lucan Baptism and genealogy in terms of the new priesthood and Temple illumines the extraordinary picture in Kells which immediately follows the genealogy and precedes Luke's description of Jesus returning from his Baptism 'full of the Holy Spirit'. On fol. 202v a bust-length portrait of Christ is set on a smaller-scale church building (Plate 7.4). With meta-physical wit the picture gives a literal rendering of the gospel image of 'the temple of his body', prompting the search for a spiritual interpretation. The image faces and is complemented by an elaborate framed display text of the opening words of Luke 4:1: 'Jesus full of the Holy Spirit' (Plate 6.2). This text and image positioned at the end of Luke's account of the Baptism and genealogy which together show Jesus to be Son of God and of human descent, thus reveal the Temple as the body or humanity of Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit. The rows of little figures beneath the building enable it to be read not only as the incarnate body of Jesus but also as his body the Church, made up of 'living stones' with Jesus as 'the chief corner stone'.

The visual ambiguities of the Temple picture in Kells mirror some of the multiple allusions of the exegetical chain of scriptural texts on the image of the Temple used by Ambrose in his Lucan commentary. The idea, central to Ambrose's use of the Temple image, that it can allude simultaneously to Christ and his Church is clearly stated in [332] Bede's homily on the chief Gospel link in the chain, John 2:12–22. Referring to the Temple in Jerusalem Bede says, 'the temple made by hands prefigured Our Lord's most sacred body' but adds that it also 'pointed to his body the Church and to the body and soul of each one of the faithful (as we find in quite a few places in the Scriptures)'.⁴⁴ This mode of interpretation is set out more fully at the beginning of his allegorical exposition on the description of the Temple in III Kings 5:1–7.51:

The house of God which King Solomon built in Jerusalem was made as a figure of the holy universal Church which, from the first of the elect to the last to be born at the end of the world, is daily being built through the grace [. . .] of its Redeemer. It is still partly in pilgrimage from Him on earth and partly, having escaped from the hardships of its sojourn, already reigns with Him in heaven where, when the Last Judgement is over, it is to reign completely with Him. [. . .] to it belongs the very mediator between God and men, Himself a human being, Christ Jesus (I Timothy 2:5), as He Himself attests when He says, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I shall raise it up'. To which the evangelist by way of explanation added, 'But He was speaking of the temple of his own body' (John 2:29, 21). Furthermore, the Apostle says to us, 'Do you not realise that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you?' (I Corinthians 3:16). If, therefore, He became the temple of God by assuming human nature and we became the temple of God through his Spirit dwelling in us (Romans 8:11), it is quite

44 *Opera homiletica*, CCSL 122, 189; L.T. Martin and D. Hurst (trans.), Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels II*, Kalamazoo 1991, 8–9.



Plate 7.4 The Book of Kells. Temptation of Christ. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. Fol. 202v.

clear that the material temple was a figure of us all, that is, both of the Lord himself and his members which we are. But [it was a figure] of Him as the uniquely chosen and precious cornerstone laid in the foundation [cf. Is 28:16, I Peter 2:6] and of us as the living stones built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, i.e. on the Lord himself [Ephesians 2:20, I Peter 2:5–7, I Corinthians 3:11] [. . .] the figure [of the temple] will apply to our Lord himself in some respects, in others to all the elect.⁴⁵ [333]

Bede's treatise shows the familiarity, within an early eighth-century insular monastic context, of the patristic tradition and, like the Kells picture, illustrates its highly creative reworking. It demonstrates that the Temple in Jerusalem prefigured both 'the temple of his body' (John 2:19,21) and the temple made of 'living stones' (I Peter 2:5–7; Ephesians 2:20) and shows that the use of the Temple as an image of the Church as the body of Christ does not simply refer to the Church on earth but to His Mystical Body, beyond temporal and spatial limitation: it includes the dead and those yet to be born. The faithful who died before the Incarnation are not regarded simply as part of the fabric of the Temple in Jerusalem which was superseded by the Christian Church: they are shown to be part of the single Body of Christ which will be completed only in the kingdom of heaven. Though Bede's treatise cannot be seen as the 'source' of the picture of the Temple in the Book of Kells, it can assist a clearer understanding of the conceptual connection between the image of the Temple on fol. 202v and the iconography of the genealogy in the pages leading up to it, a connection which, it has been suggested here, reflects patristic exegesis of Luke's text. Seen within this exegetical tradition, the Temple image and its facing text in Kells transform a literal reading of the foregoing list of Hebrew names and reveals it as chronicling both the earthly ancestors from whom Christ took 'the temple of his body' in historical time *and* the spiritual ancestors of his Body the Church, still awaiting its completion at the end of time. From the moment of the Incarnation the 'temple of his body' is shown to be 'full of the Holy Spirit'; the revelation of this at his Baptism signifies that his Body the Church is also the habitation of the Holy Spirit.

Abraham

Fols. 201v–202r in the Book of Kells have already received some comment in the light of Ambrose's exegesis on the priestly genealogy and related themes

45 *De templo*, CCSL 119A, 148. Translation used here is by Seán Connolly: I wish to thank Dr Connolly for generously making his work available to me before its publication. In *De schematibus et tropis* Bede explains that a single word or event may figuratively designate a mystical, tropological and anagogical sense at the same time. He cites the Temple as an example. Historically, it is the house built by Solomon; allegorically, it is the body of the Lord (John 2:19) or his Church (I Corinthians 3:17); tropologically it can refer to the individual faithful (I Corinthians 3:16) and anagogically it signifies the joys of the heavenly dwelling (Psalms 84:4): G.H. Tannenhaus (trans.), 'The Venerable Bede. Concerning figures and tropes' in: J.M. Miller, M.H. Frosser, T.W. Benson (eds.), Bloomington, Ind. and London 1973, 120–21.

in Luke contrasting the Old Covenant priesthood and repeated blood sacrifice in 'the former tabernacle' with the single sacrifice of Christ, the new High Priest, in 'the temple of his body'. The suggested connection between this exegesis and iconography and the picture of the Temple on the page immediately following the genealogy may now be considered further.

Directly above the calf in the inner margin of fol. 201v and facing the final page of the genealogy is a bearded figure reclining over the name of Abraham and alongside the names of Isaac and Jacob (Plate 7.2). In the New Testament, in early exegesis, liturgy and iconography Abraham is an immensely important figure of faith whose sacrifice of Isaac and reception of bread and wine from Melchisedech were seen as major prefigurings of the eucharistic sacrifice. Although Melchisedech was often represented with bread and wine in Early Christian art there is no iconographic [334] parallel showing him as a seated figure with only the chalice. Exegesis on Abraham however is of direct interest in deciphering the possible meaning of the figure in the context of Christ's genealogy.

In a solemn covenant the patriarch had received from God his new name Abraham, meaning the father of many nations (Genesis 17:5), and was promised: 'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 22:18). Already in the New Testament this is very fully interpreted, and in his commentary on the Lucan genealogy Ambrose quotes from Galatians 3 to show that all the faithful, including Gentiles, are the children of Abraham: the seed of Abraham was his son Isaac, according to the flesh, but, according to the Spirit, it is Christ. All the faithful who have been baptised in Christ have put on Christ and therefore receive through Him the promise of the Spirit made to Abraham: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek [. . .] For you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you be Christ's then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise' (Galatians 3:29). Ambrose stresses that the patriarchs, including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, lived before the age of the Law and lived in faith: grace precedes the Law and faith precedes the letter. The status accorded in the New Testament and patristic exegesis to Abraham and the other patriarchs who lived before the Incarnation and even before the Mosaic Law would have been of particular interest to a barbarian culture concerned with the fate of its own ancestors who had lived according to 'the law of nature' before their conversion to Christianity.⁴⁶ Ambrose shows the working of grace through the patriarchs quoting: 'Abraham believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness' (Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:6; cf. Romans 4:3), and 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day' (John 8:56).

In a considerable variety of contexts insular exegetes elaborated this interpretation. In the Hiberno-Latin commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, Abraham is *pater noster, id est apostolus non tantum carne sed et fide* or *pater nostrae fidei*;

46 D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach, A. Breen, 'The laws of the Irish', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 382–438, 390–96; K. McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*, 71–72, 92–100.

*fili Abrahæ omnes fideles sunt.*⁴⁷ In the Irish glosses in the Würzburg copy of the Pauline Epistles Abraham is also seen as the father of all the faithful who spiritually inherit the promised blessing given to him.⁴⁸ Bede repeatedly returns to the theme:

The house of Jacob [Abraham's descendants] refers to the universal Church; even though many of the faithful do not take their [335] physical origins from the stock of the patriarchs they are by Baptism reborn in Christ and so receive the heritage of the patriarchs.⁴⁹

In the opening chapter of Luke's Gospel both Mary and the priest Zacharias recognise the coming of Christ as the fulfilment of God's promises made 'to Abraham and his seed for ever', 'to Abraham our father' (Luke 1:55, 73), and their testimony, enshrined in the Magnificat and Benedictus respectively, formed daily canticles in the monastic office. In a homily on Luke's text Bede shows that Mary properly names Abraham in particular in the Magnificat because:

although many of the fathers and holy ones mystically brought forward testimony of the Lord's Incarnation, nevertheless it was to Abraham that the hidden mysteries of the Lord's Incarnation were first clearly predicted and to him it was specifically said: 'And in your seed all the tribes of the world earth will be blessed' [Genesis 12:3] [. . .] However, 'the seed of Abraham' does not refer only to those chosen ones who were brought forth physically from Abraham's lineage but also to us who, having been gathered together to Christ from the nations, are connected by the fellowship of faith [. . .] We too are the seed and children of Abraham since we are born by the sacraments of our Redeemer, who assumed his flesh from the race of Abraham.⁵⁰

Moreover, Bede shows that the divine promise made to Abraham does not end with the coming of Christ at his Incarnation but that 'to Abraham and his seed for ever' there will remain, until the end of the world, 'the everlasting glory of future blessedness'. Viewed in the light of this exegetical tradition, the genealogy of Christ is not only the record of a heritage but the sign of a continuing expectation; it is also the genealogy of the Church whose members, whether Gentile or Jew, are reborn in Baptism and foretaste future blessedness in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

47 *Scriptores Hiberniæ minores*, CCSL 108B, 14, 65.

48 Romans 4:1, 12, 13, 16, 17. Univ. of Würzburg, M. p.th.f.12. L.C. Stern, *Epistolæ Beati Pauli glosatæ glosa interlineali*, Halle 1910; P. Ní Chatháin, 'Notes on the Würzburg glosses' in: *Irland und die Christenheit* (note 34 supra) 190–99.

49 *Opera homiletica*, CCSL 122, 17; *Homilies on the Gospels*, I 23.

50 Op. cit., CCSL 122, 29–39; *Homilies on the Gospels*, I 41.

The heavenly banquet

On fol. 201v in the Book of Kells the figure seated above the name of Abraham with his back alongside the names of Isaac and Jacob is raising a chalice, as though about to drink from it. The chalice is similar in shape and colour to the chalice from which the vine-scroll stems in the genealogy's endpiece on the facing page (Plate 7.3). The eucharistic motif of the chalice, vine and peacocks was often used in Early Christian funerary art to allude to the eschatological banquet which the Eucharist [336] anticipates, and it is used in the scene of Christ in the heavenly liturgy on fol. 32v at the end of the Matthean genealogy in the Book of Kells. At the end of the institution of the Eucharist during the Last Supper, Christ promised the faithful He would celebrate that heavenly banquet with them:

I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it with you new in my Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

In the Book of Kells these words in Matthew's Gospel are immediately followed on the facing page, fol. 114r, by an inscribed whole-page picture of Christ with priestly orant gesture, flanked by two figures and by chalices and vines. Like the Temple picture on fol. 202v, the image of the High Priest within the sanctuary offers an allusive visual metaphor of the incarnate and mystical Body of Christ and the incorporation of the faithful in Him.⁵¹ In liturgy and exegesis the three patriarchs whose names seem to be highlighted by the reclining figure with raised chalice on fol. 201v in the Lucan genealogy of Christ and his Church are specifically associated with the promised heavenly banquet of Matthew 26:29 because they are named in Christ's prophecy:

Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down (*recumbent*) with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 8:11).

The names of the three patriarchs, in specific allusion to this text and the heavenly banquet, are cited in a Mass for the dead in the Stowe Missal.⁵²

The exegetical connection between the texts of Matthew 8:11 and Matthew 26:29 had been fully developed in Origen's allegorical interpretation of the Old Covenant priesthood and sacrifice in his important homilies on Leviticus. He describes Christ at the Last Supper on the eve of his Passion as the High Priest entering the sanctuary who will not drink the fruit of the vine until his priestly task is accomplished, that is, until he has brought his whole creation to

51 J. O'Reilly, 'The Book of Kells, folio 114r: a mystery revealed yet concealed' in: R.M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds.), *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, Edinburgh 1993, 112–13, fig. 12.1.

52 F.E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, Oxford 1881, 248.

perfection. Origen explains that therefore even the apostles and saints have not yet received their joy and that the faithful patriarchs of the Old Testament have still not received the completion of the promise made to them since they will 'not be perfected without us' (Hebrews 11:40). When the perfection is accomplished, the High Priest will drink the new wine 'in a new heaven and a new earth' and will 'gather up all the faithful together 'to build up that holy [337] body which is the Church'. He who is the head of the whole body 'does not want to receive his complete glory without us, that is, without his people who are his body and members. For he wants to dwell in this body of his Church'. This interpretation of Matthew 26:29, Origen says, glosses the text, 'many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 8:11):

Abraham is still waiting to receive his perfection. Isaac is waiting, Jacob and all the prophets are waiting for us, that with us they may receive their perfect happiness. Here is the reason why this mystery is kept till the Last Day [. . .] For it is one single body that awaits its perfection, one body that is promised a future resurrection: 'There are many members, yet one body' (I Corinthians 12:20).⁵³

The quotation is from the classic description in I Corinthians 12:4–27 of Christ and his Church in terms of a single body with many members:

For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free: and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink (I Corinthians 12:13).

In the context of the interpretation already suggested here for fols. 201v–202v in the Book of Kells, the figure with raised chalice may allude to the expectation of the heavenly banquet when the new High Priest, his priestly task accomplished, enters the second sanctuary and gathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets, the saints and all the faithful into a single body. That drawing together of the faithful into the Body of Christ is visualised in the picture of the Temple immediately following Christ's genealogy.

Christ's priestly descent, spiritually interpreted, reveals Him as the successor of the Aaronic priesthood, the eternal priest 'after the order of Melchisedech'.

53 Homily 7.2, as quoted by H. de Lubac, *Catholicism*, London 1950, 256; cf. G.W. Barkley (trans.), *Origen. Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington D.C. 1990, 137; C. Bammel, 'Insular mss. of Origen in the Carolingian empire' in: G. Jondorf and D. Dumville (eds.) *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Woodbridge 1991, 5–16 notes the survival of two seventh-century mss. from Gaul of Rufinus's translation of the homilies on Leviticus. Homily 9 is cited in Cummi-an's *letter De controversia paschali* c. 632 (note 19 supra) and the Lucan commentary of the *Irish Reference Bible* frequently cites 'Origenes dicit' (note 34 supra).

The figure partly concealed by the decorative endpiece of this Old Testament lineage on fol. 202r, waiting behind the eucharistic vine-scroll and chalice, occupies exactly the same position on the page as the haloed priestly figure placed at the door of the sanctuary in the Temple picture on the verso.

The Old Irish treatise on the Mass appended to the Stowe Missal relates stages of the eucharistic liturgy to the successive uncovering of the mystery of Christ through history. The stage from the Introit to the [338] Epistle and Gradual is regarded as 'a figure of the law of nature, wherein Christ has been renewed through all his members and deeds'; from the Gradual to the uncovering of the chalice 'is a commemoration of the law of the letter wherein Christ has been figured, only that what has been figured therein was not yet known'; from the uncovering of the host and chalice to the oblation 'is a commemoration of the law of the prophets, wherein Christ was manifestly foretold, save that it was not seen until He was born'. The full uncovering and elevation of the chalice then commemorates the Incarnation of Christ and his glory.⁵⁴

The new Chosen People

The 'living stones' arranged in regular courses on either side of the priestly figure on fol. 202v, are shown to be beneath the Temple, which may be seen as 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets' (Ephesians 2:20). The body of this priestly figure descends right to the foundation of the building and joins the two groups of people who face inwards to him and hence to each other. In his commentary on the Lucan genealogy Ambrose twice quotes Ephesians 2:14–18 to show that Gentiles and Jews are reconciled by the incarnate crucified body of Christ and now form part of his body, the Church, pictured as 'a holy temple', 'a habitation of God in the Spirit', with Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20–22; cf. I Peter 2:5–8).

Gentiles and Jews then form part of his Body, the Church, pictured as 'a holy temple', 'a habitation of God in the Spirit', with Jesus Christ himself being 'the chief cornerstone' (Ephesians 2:20–22, cf. I Peter 2:5–8).

The themes of priesthood, sacrifice and the Temple which are featured in patristic and insular exegesis on Luke's account of the Baptism and genealogy of Christ, and which seem reflected in the iconography of the genealogy in the Book of Kells, thus reach a climax in the picture of the Temple. The royal and priestly lineage of Christ, inherited when He took on human flesh ('the temple of His body') is revealed to be that of his Church also. His Old Testament earthly ancestors are the spiritual ancestors of all those who, in Baptism, share in Christ's anointing as prophet, priest and king and who, whether Jew or Gentile, are reborn as sons of God to form the new Chosen People. These themes are also gathered up in the chain of scriptural texts on the Temple image used in Ambrose's commentary on Luke's account of the Baptism. Most notably, I Peter 2:5:9–10 addresses the faithful both as 'living stones

54 G.F. Warner (ed.), *The Stowe Missal*, London 1915, 40.

built up, as a spiritual house' and as 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood [. . .] who in time past were not a people but are now the people of God'.

Seventh-century Hiberno-Latin exegesis of the Catholic Epistles highlights a number of ways in which the text of I Peter 2:5–10 was related [339] to themes already noted here in connection with patristic and insular exegesis on the baptism and genealogy of Christ. In the *Commentarius in Epistolas Catholicas Scotti Anonymi* the 'living stone rejected by men', but now chosen by God to be the chief cornerstone of the spiritual building (verses 4–8), is identified with Christ whose divinity was proclaimed in the words of the Father: 'This is my beloved Son'. The faithful are admonished to be 'as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God' (verse 5); the commentary notes that each of the faithful is a member of the eternal priest of whom it was said: 'Thou art a priest for ever (after the order of Melchisedech)'.⁵⁵ The *Tractatus Hilarii in Septem Epistolas Canonicas* glosses the acceptable 'spiritual sacrifices' of the holy priesthood of the faithful as the offering of hymns, Psalms and prayers (Colossians 3:16) and directly contrasts them with the unacceptable blood sacrifice of a calf. In this commentary's gloss on the individual phrases in I Peter 2:9: 'You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation', themes from exegesis on the baptism and Lucan genealogy again appear: *genus electum: in Abraham; regale sacerdotium: in Aaron; gens sancta: id est in baptismo*.⁵⁶ The importance of baptism in the formation of this new people of God, pictured both as a single body and as a holy temple or habitation of God, is again stressed in the early Irish glosses on Ephesians 2. The phrase in verse 16, 'he might reconcile both (Jews and Gentiles) unto God in one body', is glossed: 'by bestowing the gifts of the Spirit on all'.⁵⁷

These biblical images of the formation of the new Chosen People of God through baptism were applied by insular writers to their own society. The text from Matthew 8:11, for example, *Venient ab oriente et occidente et recumbent cum Abraham et Isaac et Iacob in regno caelorum*, is quoted by St Patrick in each of his pastoral letters where those coming from east and west to join the patriarchs and 'banquet with Christ' in the heavenly kingdom are clearly identified by Patrick with recent converts, anointed with chrism, 'a people newly coming to belief whom the Lord took from the uttermost parts of the earth as long ago he promised through his prophets'. Patrick shows the prophecy of Hosea 1:10 has been fulfilled through baptism and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them:

Those who were not my people I will call 'my people'. And in the very place where it was said: 'You are not my people', they will be [340]

55 *Scriptores Hiberniae minores*, CCSL 108B, 31–33, dated c. 650–90, the *Tractatus Hilarii* to c. 690–708, Bede's commentary on the Catholic Epistles to c. 708–09.

56 *Ibid.*, 82, 32.

57 See n. 48. The middle wall of partition (verse 14) is glossed as sin, which was between God and man, between body and soul. The word 'temple' in: Ephesians 1:21 is glossed as 'the assembly of the saints; they are called a temple because Christ dwells in them, that is, it is a habitation for God'.

called ‘sons of the living God’. Consequently, then, in Ireland, they who never had knowledge of God [. . .] have lately been made a people of the Lord and called the children of God.⁵⁸

The same Hosea text is cited in I Peter 1:9–10 where the ‘living stones’ of the spiritual house, who are also a ‘royal priesthood’, are further identified as ‘a holy nation, a chosen people [. . .] who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God’.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, together with other patriarchs and the Old Testament prophets are related not only to the image of the Church as the body of Christ but to the other great New Testament image of the Church as a building or temple made up of the living stones of the faithful. The temple building image can refer variously to the Jewish Temple built in the city of Jerusalem in the Promised Land, which is a type or prefiguring of the Church, and also to the Temple in the heavenly Jerusalem described in Revelation. In some contexts it could be used interchangeably with the image of the heavenly city or paradisaical promised land towards which the Church on earth is journeying in pilgrimage. The Epistle to the Hebrews describes Abraham, together with Isaac and Jacob as ‘the co-heirs of the same promise’, looking beyond their earthly inheritance ‘for a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God’; like other patriarchs and prophets they died ‘according to the faith, not having received the promises but beholding them afar off’ as pilgrims and strangers seeking a heavenly country: ‘Therefore God [. . .] has prepared for them a city’ (Hebrews 11:10, 13–16). Bede, in his allegorical commentary on the Temple, shows that ‘many of the patriarchs of the Old Testament attained such a peak of perfection [. . .] that they are not to be considered inferior to the Apostles’; ‘although still separated from the mysteries of the Lord’s Incarnation, nevertheless by their faith and preaching they were very near’. The patriarchs and prophets are accordingly visualised as part of the fabric of Solomon’s Temple which is ‘a figure of the holy universal Church’.⁵⁹

The Epistle to the Ephesians shows that the Gentiles are reconciled in Christ to these chosen people of the Old Covenant, no more strangers and foreigners but ‘fellow citizens and members of the household of God’ (Ephesians 2:19). They are also visualised as forming part of the building fabric of the house or temple which represents the single community of the new People of God and is built upon the apostles *and* prophets. This image is animated by allusion to the Pauline image of the body as the temple or habitation of God so that the Church is seen as both building and body (Ephesians 2:20–22), as in the picture in the Book of Kells on fol. 202v. [341]

58 D Connelly, *The letters of Saint Patrick*, Maynooth 1993, 71, 80.

59 *De templo*, CCSL 119A, 161–62.

The Second Adam

In Luke's Gospel alone the line of earthly ancestors from whom Christ took his humanity is traced right back, beyond Abraham and the patriarchs, to Adam 'who was the son of God' (Luke 3:38). The genealogy ends with these words in the Book of Kells on fol. 202r (Plate 7.3), and the image of the Temple appears on the following page (Plate 7.4). Augustine's commentary on the image of 'the temple of his body' throws additional light on the appropriateness of the Temple image at this juncture of Luke's text. Augustine describes how Adam, who was both one man and the whole human race, was broken and scattered by sin but gathered together and renewed in Christ:

because an Adam has come without sin that He might destroy Adam's sin in his flesh and that Adam might restore the image of God to himself. From Adam, therefore, is Christ's flesh; from Adam, therefore, is the temple which the Jews destroyed and the Lord raised up again in three days. For He raised up again his flesh [. . .] Our Lord Jesus Christ received his body from Adam, but did not take the sin of Adam – He took his bodily temple from him, not the iniquity which must be driven from the temple – but this flesh which He took from Adam [. . .] the Jews crucified. They destroyed the temple built in forty-six years and He raised it up in three days.⁶⁰

The association of Adam and Christ with the image of the Temple had already been expressed in insular art. In an exegesis well known to Bede and to Hiberno-Latin commentators, Augustine noted that all peoples originate in Adam and that in the four letters of his name the four quarters of the earth are signified: the initial letters of the Greek words for east, west, north and south spell out the name of Adam.⁶¹ The numerical values of the four letters of Adam's name add up to forty-six, the number of years it took to build the Temple in Jerusalem which Christ said he would raise up in three days (John 2:19–21). Cassiodorus had pictures of the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon in his *Codex Grandior* which Bede knew of, and referred to, in his own treatises on the Tabernacle and the Temple. In the *Codex Amiatinus* produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow, a large frontispiece diagram of the 'former Tabernacle' is inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel descended [342] from the sons of Jacob (Figure 1.1). Through the addition of a tiny cross over the Sanctuary entrance and the inscription of the Greek names of the four cardinal points which conceal the name of Adam and the

60 *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, 124, *CCSL* 35, 108; W. Rettig (trans.), *St Augustine, Tractates on the Gospel of John 1–10*, Washington D.C. 1988, 222–24.

61 For Adam's name as a cosmic tetragrammaton in the Fathers, the Book of Enoch, Isidore's *Etymologiae* and in Hiberno-Latin exegesis, see R.E. McNally, 'The Evangelists in Hiberno-Latin Tradition' (see note 41 *supra*) 115–16.

number fortysix, the building also alludes to the Second Adam and the temple of his body which superseded the temple made with hands.⁶²

In Ambrose's commentary on the Lucan Baptism it is precisely in the context of discussing Christ as the Second Adam from whose body on the Cross the Church was born, that he describes the Church by quoting from Ephesians 2, I Peter 2 and other texts in the biblical chain which picture the Church as the Body of Christ through the image of the Temple building. Ambrose notes that the name of Adam comes at the end of the Lucan genealogy, thus one made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) comes before his descendant who was the image of God. Adam, the created son of God, is 'a figure of Him to come' (Romans 5:14), that is the Son of God.⁶³

The Pauline image of the individual member of the Church as the temple of God (I Corinthians 3:17, 6:9; II Corinthians 6:16) is part of the very language of the baptismal rite where the sin of Adam is renounced and the devil expelled.⁶⁴ A long exegetical and catechetical tradition stressed the need for the baptised who have renounced the Old Adam and become sons of God to remain vigilant, under Christ, against the continuing assaults of the devil. This is prefigured in the Second Adam's own temptation by the devil in the desert and recalled in the Church's liturgy at the beginning of Lent. The tradition helps illumine the Kells picture of the Temple and its facing text, which are followed by the account of Christ's Temptation. The double opening may be read as showing the baptised Christian or the whole Church 'full of the Holy Spirit' and defended by Christ from the devil. [343]

The Temptation

George Henderson has stressed the importance of the expulsion of the devil by Baptism for an understanding of the picture and has captured the sense of the pivotal positioning of the picture of the Second Adam in Luke's text:

The Book of Kells picture, dominated by Christ in his Church, surrounded by his redeemed people, glorified by angels, easily confuting

62 J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts 6th to the 9th Century*, London 1978, cat. 7, pl. 23. For the uses of the Temple symbolism of 46 in Augustine and Bede, see W. Berschin 'Opus deliberatum perfectum: Why did the Venerable Bede write a second prose Life of St Cuthbert?' in: G. Bonner, D. Rollason, C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St. Cuthbert, his Cult and Community to AD. 1200*, Woodbridge 1989, 95–102. For the Codex Amiatinus diagram see A.G. Holder (trans.), Bede, *On the Tabernacle*, Liverpool 1994, 92, n. 1 and frontispiece.

63 CCSL 14, 103–04.

64 Stowe Missal, F.E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, Oxford 1881, 207, 210, 213; cf. Gallican sacramentary ordo for Easter Saturday Baptism with provision for exorcism of *omnes exercitus diaboli . . . ut fiat templum Dei sanctum*, J.M. Neale and G.H. Forbes (eds.), *The Ancient Liturgies of the Gallican Church*, Burntisland 1855, 269.

the black tempter, tackles the contents of the Gospel chapters before and after and gives full weight to the words displayed on the facing recto.⁶⁵

Most modern scholars, however, have seen the picture on fol. 202v in the Book of Kells in isolation from the texts which precede it and have identified it as the Temptation of Christ. Carol Farr believes that the Kells picture ‘almost undoubtedly depicts the Temptation on the Temple roof’, although she transforms the traditional reading of the picture as a narrative illustration by viewing it in the context of Lenten liturgical themes and through exegesis of the gospel account of the Temptation and of the Old Testament texts which it cites, particularly Psalm 90.⁶⁶ Dr Farr shows how, in the Tyconian tradition of reading Psalm 90 in terms of the figure of ‘Christ the Head and his Body the Church’, Augustine’s commentary on the Psalm relates it not only to the Temptation of Christ but to the continuing temptation and ultimate triumph of his Church which, it is argued, is the theme of the picture in Kells. In this argument’s detailed review of the familiarity in insular monastic culture of patristic exegesis on the image of the Church as the Body of Christ and on the related New Testament image of the Church as a spiritual building prefigured in the Tabernacle and the Temple of Jerusalem, there is much that is complementary to the interpretation of the picture suggested in the present discussion. Dr Farr herself points to several remaining enigmas, however, if the picture is seen primarily as a symbolic exposition of the Temptation narrative.

First, there is the question of why the Temptation should have received the extraordinarily elevated decorative status of a whole-page picture facing a framed display text. The placing of pictures within the [344] gospel text (rather than at its opening or in the prefatory pages of the codex) is exceedingly rare in surviving early medieval gospel books. Kells has two such pictures and, arguably, fol. 124r was reserved for a third which was not executed. Fol. 124r faces an elaborate framed display text of Matthew 27:38 from the account of the Crucifixion and the picture on fol. 114r, which has a framed display text on its verso, is also placed in a position of great theological importance, at Matthew 26:30, after Christ’s institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper and before the account of the Passion.

Secondly, not only does Kells lavish apparently disproportionate decorative attention on the Temptation but chooses to do so in the context of Luke’s Gospel rather than Matthew’s, which was the version of the story read on the first Sunday in Lent in most known early lectionary systems. Nor is Kells entirely

65 G.D.S. Henderson, *Bede and the Visual Arts*, Jarrow Lecture 1980, 17–18; *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel Books 650–800*, London 1987, 168–74: ‘The emphasis in the Stowe Missal on the expulsion of the devil by baptism is sufficient in itself to explain the iconography of the Kells picture. It subsumes Christ’s “Temptation” in the general victory offered by Christ to mankind’, 174.

66 C.A. Farr, *Lection and interpretation: the liturgical and exegetical back ground of the illustrations in the book of Kells* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas at Austin 1989), 20, 74–112.

idiosyncratic in this respect. The opening of Luke 4:1 which faces the Kells picture is also decoratively highlighted, though on a much more modest scale, in a number of other Insular gospel books. Dr Farr concludes that the Lucan version of the Temptation narrative was probably used as a lection for Quadragesima in some lost non-Roman liturgy.⁶⁷ While this may well be so and would have important implications for understanding the function of the image in the book and in the life of the community in which it was used, it is obviously difficult to demonstrate, as so little insular liturgical material remains and because the decorative structuring of texts in Insular gospel books seems to have served a variety of functions, not only liturgical.

Thirdly, the three Temptations of Christ are recounted in Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13, but in Luke's version the Temple incident is the last of the three Temptations: it does not appear in the text of the Book of Kells, therefore, until fol. 204r, which is three folios after the Temple picture. Nor is the particular importance of the third Temptation (Luke 4:9–12) signified in the layout and decoration of its text on fol. 204r, in marked contrast to the embellishment of the opening of Luke 4:1 which actually faces the picture.

Finally, if the Temple picture on fol. 202v is seen as only referring forward, to the text of the Temptation, and if the decoration of Luke 4:1 on fol. 203r is explained as a structural break from the preceding text of the genealogy, it is difficult to explain why the picture is positioned *between* the end of the genealogy and the beginning of Luke 4.1 (Plate 7.4, Plate 6.2).

In the present discussion it has been suggested that the layout and decoration of the Lucan genealogy and the Temple picture in the Book of Kells are related and that they are responsive to the theological significance of the gospel text as perceived in patristic and insular exegesis. Ambrose devoted the whole of Book III of his commentary on Luke to [345] the text of the genealogy alone: the exegetical tradition of reading Scripture did not regard the list of Christ's ancestors as an awkward editorial intrusion into Luke's narrative of the Baptism and Temptation but as an integral part of an important statement about the identity of Christ and the collective personality of his Church. It is worth recalling at this point that commentators stress that Luke's juxtaposition of Baptism and genealogy sets out Christ's divine Sonship as well as his earthly ancestry, and that the in-dwelling or invisible anointing of the Holy Spirit begun at the Incarnation was manifested on the eve of his public ministry when, at his Baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and the Father proclaimed 'You are my beloved Son' (Luke 3:22). The last verse of the Lucan genealogy again reveals Him to be 'the son of Adam, who was the son of God' (Luke 3:38), and the very next words of Luke's text specifically recall the Baptism before setting the scene for the Temptation: 'And Jesus full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert' (Luke 4:1). Matthew's version, which continues directly from his

67 Op. cit., 141–61.

account of the Baptism with no intervening genealogy, simply says, ‘Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil’ (Matthew 4:1). Bede notes the difference in his Lucan commentary.

In the Temptation which immediately follows, the devil finally taunts Jesus to prove his divine Sonship (‘If thou be the son of God [. . .]’) by casting Himself from the top of the Temple and literally fulfilling the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 90:11–12. After the Temptation (Luke 4:2–13) Jesus returns to Galilee ‘in the power of the Spirit’ (4:14) and in the synagogue at Nazareth publicly reads from the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61:1–2: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he has anointed me [. . .] to preach deliverance to the captives [. . .]’, a prophecy Jesus claims has been fulfilled in Himself (4:18–21). Those present fail, like the devil, to ‘see’ who He is and demand ‘Is this not the son of Joseph?’ (4:22), which vividly recalls Luke’s introduction to the genealogy: ‘Jesus [. . .] being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph’ (3:12). The irony continues, as only the devil or unclean spirit of a person possessed recognises who Jesus is and acclaims Him: ‘I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God’ (4:34); other devils finally acknowledge his divine identity: “‘Thou art the Son of God’ [. . .] they knew he was the Christ’ (4:41). An eighth-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke illustrates contemporary interest in connections within the passage. It shows the fulfilment of the prophecy: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me’ in the descent of the Spirit at the Incarnation and Baptism in the Jordan, and it notes that Isaiah’s prophecy of ‘deliverance to the captives’ refers to the redemption of all people captive in Adam to the devil. The question, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ is directly linked with the taunt of the devil at the Temptation, ‘If you [346] are the Son (of God) [. . .]’.⁶⁸ The sequence in Luke demonstrates the fulfilment of the prophecies of Psalm 90 and Is 61:1–2, but the largest prophecy is the genealogy itself which shows Jesus prefigured throughout the history of his people going back to the patriarchs before the Law, and indeed the whole of human history back to Adam.

The sacred monogram

The isolation of just the opening words of Luke 4:1 ‘Jesus full of the Holy Spirit’ on fol. 203r in Kells would seem, therefore, not simply to be marking the reopening of the narrative after the genealogy but to be identifying the great theme of this whole sequence of Luke’s text which reveals that Jesus of Nazareth is also Son of God, hence the picture of his human body ‘full of the Holy Spirit’. Several Insular gospel books highlight this verse by the enlargement or other embellishment of the opening initial, word or line, but in Kells alone the opening words, *I[e]s[u]s autem plenus Sp[iritu]s S[an]c[t]o*, though written in abbreviated form, are enlarged to fill the whole page and are elaborately framed and veiled with

68 CCSL 108C, 36, also 29 for the relation of Luke 4:1 to the theme of Baptism: the phrase *regressus est a Iordane* is associated with the four rivers of Eden rising from a single fount.

ornament which elevates the text to the level of a gospel *incipit* (Plate 6.2). The first two letters of Jesus's abbreviated name dominate the upper half of the page. The decoration of the *nomen sacrum* Ihs meaning Saviour, and the epithet 'full of the Holy Spirit' at the end of the Lucan genealogy may be seen as a counterpart to the treatment of his Greek title Christ (meaning the Anointed One) in the *chi-rho* monogram at the culmination of the genealogy in Matthew.

The Reference Bible's commentary on Matthew's genealogy reflects the Hiberno-Latin practice of showing how the two names Jesus and Christ and the two gospel genealogies together reveal Him as human and divine, the Davidic Messiah and the Son of God, as king and priest. The very differences in the ancestral names, the number of generations and the direction of tracing descent in the two gospel versions of Christ's genealogy help explain why they received such a burden of exposition to show that, properly read, they were in fact complementary revelations of the same truth. The mysterious latent power of names, genealogies and epithets to reveal identity was an important feature of patristic exegesis which touched a vital chord for insular and especially Hiberno-Latin commentators and received eloquent expression in the Book of Kells. The convention of writing the Greek title Christ and the Greek version of the name Jesus in Romanised versions of their initial letters with Latin endings offers some kind of cryptic calligraphic parallel to the common exegetical practice of expounding the significance of [347] a name or title through its etymology and its Greek or even Hebrew equivalent. The primary function of the Xpi monogram on fol. 34r and of the Ihs monogram on fol. 203r in Kells was patently not as an aid to reading aloud. The splendour of the page and the difficulty of deciphering the veiled letter forms of its literal text compel the reader to pause and ponder the significance of the sacred names.

Remarkable though fol. 203r is, the modern reader may feel it is less magnificent in conception than the *chi-rho* design and is lacking in the kind of exegesis hidden on fol. 34r in the embellishment of the name of Christ.⁶⁹ Among the display pages in the Book of Kells, fol. 203r is unique in preserving the panelled vertical shafts of the first two combined letters, the 'I' and 'h' of the name of Jesus, as discrete elements, rather in the manner of earlier Insular gospel book *incipits*. A further unique feature is the curiously exotic six-lobed pierced ornament within the bowl of the 'h', the number six emphasised a second and a third time by concentric rings of dotting within the lobes, which in turn are encircled by three concentric circles of colour interspersed by decorative bands and with rectangular mounts marking off the outer band at three of its cardinal points. This abstract circular shape within the sacred name is, like the golden rhombus at the centre of the letter *chi* on fol. 34r, the focal point of the design (Plate 6.2, Plate 7.5).

On the folio facing the Ihs monogram, the side panels of the Temple picture's frame have been rendered as stylised columns filled with golden ornament and with crosses in the place of bases and capitals, a device used for the capitals of

69 S. Lewis, 'Sacred calligraphy: the chi-rho page in the Book of Kells' (note 2 supra) 140–151.



Plate 7.5 The Book of Kells. The name of Christ, Matthew 1:18. The Board of Trinity College Dublin, Fol. 34r.

the two columns supporting the arch over Christ in fol. 114r. In the exegetical context in which the Temple picture has been located, the columnar frame may also be read as alluding to the two bronze pillars erected either side of the Temple entrance by Solomon (II Chron 3:5). Bede has a detailed interpretation of this verse and of the multiple underlying meanings of the columns which can refer to the apostles and spiritual teachers who are pillars of the church (cf. Galatians 2:9) and bulwarks of truth (cf. I Timothy 3:15), and particularly to their drawing together both Jews and Gentiles, through Baptism, into the Church. The 'mystery of the material pillars' at the entrance to the Temple is also a reminder that 'both in prosperity and adversity we must keep the entrance to our heavenly homeland firmly before the eyes of our mind'. The great height of the pillars fittingly alludes to the spiritual ascent of the elect, 'that they may merit to see their Creator face to face, for they will have nothing further to seek when they reach Him who is above all things'. The capitals of the pillars in the Kells picture are on a level with the head of Christ and with the upper row of little figures ascending towards Him. Finally [348] Bede reveals 'the more profound sense' of the two pillars when he discerns in the scriptural account of their dimensions an established sacred numerology, for concealed in the eighteen cubits of their height is the name of Jesus. Not only is eighteen the multiple of three and six, which carry their usual associations with the Trinity and the six days of creation, but 'the name of Jesus begins from this number among the Greeks. With them the first letter of this name means ten and the second eight'.⁷⁰ The column-like shafts of the first two letters of Jesus's name on fol. 203r and the incorporation of the repeated motifs of three and six in the decoration of the letter 'h' may, therefore, conceal an arcane exegesis of the sacred name, identifying Jesus with the Temple and further linking word and image.

The language of paradox

Similarly, the striking ambiguities of the mixed visual metaphor on fol. 202v facing the name of Jesus in the Book of Kells can yield a spiritual insight. The picture adopts a familiar exegetical technique in telescoping the New Testament image of the Temple with that of the body (I Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:15–16; Colossians 1:18) so that the Temple, which can denote the incarnate body of Christ is also revealed as representing the mystical Body of Christ, with Christ as its head, its members forming the 'living stones' of a curiously organic building which grows up into a Temple of the Lord (cf. I Peter 2:5–6; Ephesians 2:21).

Some of the features that may still puzzle us in the Kells picture also exercised the Fathers commenting on the texts which ultimately underlie this extraordinary image, because the scriptural chains themselves, read at a literal level, are often

70 CCSL 119A, 199. This interpretation of 18 is common in exegesis of Genesis 14:14.

self-contradictory, irrational or bizarre. Augustine, for example, in his commentary on Psalm 86, raises the question of how the Temple of God can be 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets' (Ephesians 2:20) when it was also written that 'other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid: which is Jesus Christ' (I Corinthians 3:11)? Augustine replies with another paradox: the apostles and prophets are foundations in the sense that they sustain our weakness (lesser 'living stones' in the fabric of the building), but Christ is the foundation of all foundations, the pillar of pillars in this building. Both scriptural statements are spiritually true though literally incompatible. The small priestly haloed figure in the Kells picture, whose head is in the sanctuary but whose pillar-like body penetrates to the very foundation of the building which may also be read as being built upon the apostles and prophets, may be a pictorial equivalent of the exegetical attempt to resolve this paradox. Augustine also asks how Christ can be [349] both the foundation and the keystone of this building, both at the base and the top? He explains that, unlike bodies which have spatial limitations, 'the divinity is present in all places and the likeness of all things can be applied to it, though in reality it is none of these things'. On the contrary, all things have their reality in Christ. Augustine finds no incongruity therefore, in the idea that 'just as the foundation of an earthly building is at the base, so the foundation of the heavenly building is at the top, in heaven'.⁷¹ Rightly understood in *lectio divina* this building is complemented, not contradicted, by the corporeal image of the Church as the pilgrim body still on earth, its Head in heaven. Similarly, the large portrait bust of Christ in the Kells picture may be read as both the head of the body and as the cornerstone or keystone of the building.⁷²

Such apparent contradictions and obscurities in Scripture were regarded as pointing to a hidden significance and attracted the particular interest of exegetes. Augustine provides a second example of relevance in considering the Kells Temple picture and its role in the larger decorative unit formed by fols. 200r–203r. In the synoptic gospels the disbelieving Jews ask for a sign of Jesus' identity. He replies, 'A sign shall not be given [this generation] but the sign of Jonah the prophet' (Matthew 12:39, Luke 11:29). However, in John's Gospel he does give another sign 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2:19). Augustine was drawn to reconcile the two apparently contradictory signs given

71 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 51–100, CCL 39, 1198–1203.

72 G. Ladner, 'The symbolism of the biblical cornerstone in the medieval West' in: *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages. Selected Studies in History and Art I*, Rome 1983, 171–96, notes that the *lapis angularis* of Psalms 117:96 (cited in the synoptic Gospels, Acts 4:11 and I Peter 2:7) is usually combined with Isaiah 28:16 and interpreted not exclusively as a coping stone but as a cornerstone or foundation stone (173). The *caput anguli* image was identified with Christ as head of the Church in the body metaphor used in Ephesians 4:15 (194). C. Nordenfalk, 'Another look at the Book of Kells' (note 3 *supra*) suggests the possible influence on the Kells picture of an illustrated copy of Prudentius' *Dittochaëum* where 'the stone which the builders rejected' is raised to the top of the Temple in Jerusalem: 'Now it is the head of the Temple and holds the new stones together'. This may also explain the two Ottonian representations of the Temptation which, like Kells, show Christ as a half-length figure at the top of the Temple.

by Jesus, Jonah and the Temple, in the significant context of explaining the spiritual blindness of those who failed to see the hidden God, the Lord of glory, in the crucified and risen body of Jesus. He quotes Matthew's story of the sign of Jonah and then says Jesus also spoke 'through another similitude of this same sign', and he quotes John's story of the Temple of Jesus's body: 'His flesh was the Temple of the divinity hidden within. Whence the Jews outwardly saw the Temple, the Deity dwelling within they saw not'.⁷³ [350]

Reasons have already been considered here for supposing that the fish-man figure in the Lucan genealogy in the Book of Kells, fol. 201, may well be an allusion to the prophet Jonah and to the meaning of his Latin name, *columba*, and signify that Jonah's established association with the sacramental sharing of Christ's death and Resurrection in Baptism is particularly fitting in the context. It has been noted that the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove at Christ's Baptism immediately preceding the genealogy signifies the descent of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit into His body the Church. The individual soul thus becomes a dove (a *columba* or a Jonah) at baptism, that is, a vessel or habitation of the Holy Spirit, like Christ. Both Jonah and the Temple are signs given by Christ Himself in response to demands for proof of His divine power, yet in the gospels both are explicitly interpreted as referring to his incarnate, crucified and risen body. In exegesis both the dove and the Temple are habitations of the Holy Spirit, both can be used as images of the individual Christian, both can also represent the unity of the whole Church, both are particularly associated with Baptism and with the spiritual life of the baptised.

The underlying spiritual similarity of dove and Temple is obscured by their manifest material differences. But it was precisely the puzzling decision of the Holy Spirit to descend in so small and simple a creature as a dove which prompted exegetical ingenuity in penetrating beneath the literal letter of scriptural passages about doves and finding that, spiritually interpreted, they revealed the dove to be a particularly appropriate vessel or habitation of the Holy Spirit. Ambrose raises this very question in his commentary on Christ's Baptism in Luke's Gospel, the same context in which he also explores the multiple allusions of the image of the Temple. Moreover, he directly compares the corporeal appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove at Christ's Baptism with the invisible presence of God in the Temple.⁷⁴ In the Book of Kells the evident differences between the diverting 'Jonah' figure with six birds enlivening the column of Hebrew names on fol. 201r, and the solemn whole-page picture of the Temple on fol. 202v obscure the fact that they distinctively point to the same truth. They function as metaphysical conceits and, placed within the same decorative sequence in the gospel text, can illuminate each other, like scriptural texts in an exegetical chain.

⁷³ *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 51–100, CCSL 39, 843–845.

⁷⁴ CCSL 14, 72–74. M. Lapidge, 'Columbanus and the Antiphony of Bangor' (note 18 supra) 108, n. 18.

The Gentile Ninevites saved by Jonah's mission are often paradoxically identified with the Jews to whom Christ brought the means of deliverance from sin, enabling them to enter the Church through repentance and baptism. Christ's reference to Jonah occurs in both Matthew 12:39–45 and Luke 11:24–32 in the context of an exorcism and of Christ's teaching about an exorcised man who is repossessed by seven [351] unclean spirits or devils and becomes their dwelling-place. Ambrose, in his commentary on Luke's Gospel, sees the seven devils as signifying the spiritually and life of the unrepentant Jews, still living under the Law, contrasted with the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit which fills the baptised. In Bede's homily 1.12 already referred to, this gospel passage is integrated into the time-honoured chain of texts linking Christ's Baptism and the sacrament of Baptism, the importance of the dove and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. By fasting in the desert after the descent of the dove at his baptism, Christ showed by example 'that after we have received the forgiveness of sins in Baptism, we should devote ourselves to vigils, fasts, prayers and other spiritually fruitful things, lest [. . .] the unclean spirit which had been expelled from our heart by Baptism may return and, finding us fruitless in spiritual riches, may weigh us down with a sevenfold pestilence and our last state be worse than our first'. Accordingly, Bede admonishes his readers to study and follow the example of the dove whose sevenfold nature described in the Song of Songs presents seven examples of virtue as 'the grace of the Holy spirit, who descended as a dove, is sevenfold'.⁷⁵ The story of the seven devils attached to the gospel citations of Jonah is thus applied in some detail to the spiritual life of the baptised, who are continually threatened by the devil and continue to need the operation of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit received in their post-baptismal anointing. How to remain a fitting habitation or temple of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, the purpose of the post-baptismal life. The Book of Kells' depiction of the devil driven from the bodily temple of Jesus's humanity simultaneously reveals Jesus's identity, 'full of the Holy Spirit', and the vocation of the baptised who are called to a life-long process of 'conversion' to become like Him (Plate 7.4, Plate 6.2).

The theme has a particular importance for the *monastic* life which simply seeks more fully the perfecting of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit granted to all the baptised. The eighth-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke's Gospel which glosses the phrase in Luke 4:1, *Jesus autem plenus Spiritu sancto as id est, septem dona Spiritu[s] sancti habens, et de hac plenitudine [. . .] eius nos omnes accipimus*, sees the same verse's reference to Christ returning from the Jordan and going into the desert as a model for the monastic life: *Et hanc deserti regulam sancti monachi sequebantur*. The devil in this desert, who once tempted and overcame Adam, will overcome the man who is earthly but will be overcome by the heavenly man; it is good, therefore, to flee the crowds of vices and seek the secrets of perfection.⁷⁶ [352]

⁷⁵ CCSL 122, 83–86.

⁷⁶ CCSL 108C, 28–30.

Images of Tabernacle, Temple and the heavenly Jerusalem

If the illustrations in the Book of Kells were partly inspired by exegesis of the gospel text and incorporate pictorial adaptations of rhetorical techniques, then the objectives of exegesis may offer some guide to the composition and function of the images. By this criterion, it seems unlikely that the picture of the Temple on fol. 202v was intended as a static and didactic representation of theological or ecclesiological truths, or that it was intended to be read, in a manner more suited to some later medieval works, as an onion-layered series of fixed meanings denoting successively the body of Christ, of the individual faithful and of the Church. Patristic exegesis, in contrast, is concerned to show the *simultaneity* of such truths as aspects of a single truth and to show the continuing significance of the spiritual interpretation of the literal text for the present reader who is provided with images for *meditatio* and *imitatio*. The objective, using the image of the Temple, is nowhere more fully and clearly demonstrated than in the commentaries and homilies of Bede and especially in *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*, which are detailed allegorical commentaries on Exodus 24:12–30:21 and on 3 Kings 5:1–7:51 respectively.

Bede distinguishes between the temporary Tabernacle built by Moses in the desert, ‘on the route by which one reaches the land of promise’, and the Temple built by Solomon in the land of promise itself in the royal city of Jerusalem ‘on an ever inviolable foundation until it fulfilled the task of the heavenly figures imposed upon it. For these reasons the former can be taken to represent the toil and exile of the present Church, the latter the rest and happiness of the future Church’.⁷⁷ Tabernacle and Temple cannot simply be equated with the Church on earth and in heaven respectively, however. Because the Tabernacle was made by the people of Israel alone it ‘can be chiefly taken as a symbolic expression for the Fathers of the Old Testament and the ancient people of God’. The Temple of Solomon was also built long before the Incarnation but, because Solomon used the servants of Hiram king of Tyre in its construction, it may be seen as representing ‘the Church assembled from the Gentiles’, that is the new Chosen People. *Both* these Old Testament sanctuaries, however, when spiritually interpreted,

can be shown in many ways to suggest symbolically both the daily labours of the present Church and the everlasting rewards and joys in the future and the salvation of all nations in Christ.⁷⁸

The literal text of the Old Testament’s detailed description of the construction, layout, dimensions, ornaments and furnishings of Tabernacle and Temple

⁷⁷ *De templo*, CCSL 119A, 147–48.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

therefore provides a rhetorical figure in which the nature of Christ and of his Church, past, present and to come, are delineated and [353] the reader finds a model of the spiritual life. The process of reading the figure to reveal this underlying significance is conducted and validated through reference to other scriptural texts.

The key links in the chains are set out in the opening section of Book One of *De templo*. The house of God built by Solomon ‘as a figure of the holy universal Church’ refers both to Christ who said of the temple of his body, ‘Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up’ (John 2:19–21), and to the faithful who are ‘the temple of God’ (I Corinthians 3:16):

If, therefore, He became the temple of God by assuming human nature and we became the temple of God through his Spirit dwelling in us [Romans 8:11], it is quite clear that the material Temple [of Solomon] was a figure of us all, that is both of the Lord Himself and his members which we are [. . .] of Him as the uniquely chosen and precious cornerstone laid in the foundation [Is 28:16] and of us as the living stones built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, that is, on the Lord Himself [Ephesians 2:20; I Peter 2:5–6].⁷⁹

The texts Bede uses here to expound the Old Testament description of the Temple as a figure referring simultaneously to Christ’s incarnate body, to the individual faithful and to the community of the new Chosen People, the Church, on earth and in heaven, are paralleled in Ambrose’s much earlier use of the same array of texts to expound the figure of the Old Testament Temple used by Luke in the opening chapters of his gospel.

Exegesis elaborated the importance of Tabernacle and Temple in Scripture as representing the whole complex relationship of the Old Covenant and the New, historically distinct, antithetical and yet mystically united. The more restrictive medium of pictorial art produced architecturally ambiguous representations of a single building which, through cryptic inscriptions or the larger context in which the image was positioned, could be read as referring simultaneously to Tabernacle, Temple and the heavenly Jerusalem. While the physical appearance of the single house-shaped structure on fol. 202v in the Book of Kells does not seem to have been significantly influenced by the Old Testament descriptions of the fabric of Tabernacle and Temple, nevertheless it may reflect their treatment in the New Testament which strongly suggests their interrelatedness, their combined role in the whole history of salvation and the sense that they are both but the copies or shadows of a heavenly reality (Hebrews 8:5, 10:1).

79 Ibid., 147.

Descriptions of the heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation consciously evoke both Tabernacle and Temple.⁸⁰ The vision of the power [354] of God filling the heavenly Temple (Revelation 15:5,8) recalls scenes of God taking possession of his Tabernacle in the desert (Exodus 40:34–35) and of his Temple in Jerusalem (III Kings 8:10–11; Is 6:4). The eschatological vision of the New Jerusalem in ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ is announced: ‘Behold the tabernacle of God with men: and He will dwell with them. And they shall be his people’ (Revelation 21:3). Thus all three sanctuaries – the Tabernacle, the Temple and the heavenly Jerusalem (variously described as Temple or city) – represent the place where God dwells with his people.

Recapitulation

At the Incarnation the human body of Jesus became the new place of the divine presence. This is expressed in John’s Gospel which compares Jesus with the Temple building in Jerusalem and presents Him as the new Temple. In Luke’s Gospel the concept is expressed through his long introduction to the account of the Incarnation by the theme of the Old Covenant priesthood and Temple which Jesus came both to fulfil and to replace. Ambrose’s development of Luke’s own image and his use of the techniques of the Epistle to the Hebrews in comparing Christ with ‘the tabernacle made with hands’ explicitly incorporates John’s image of ‘the temple of his body’. Ambrose’s continued use of the Temple theme in his exegesis of Luke’s account of Christ’s Baptism and priestly genealogy reveals the significance of the Incarnation by showing Jesus of Nazareth to be Son of God and ‘full of the Holy Spirit’, a concept which, it has been suggested here, is expressed by the Temple picture and its facing text in the Book of Kells showing the human body of Jesus as the Temple, ‘full of the Holy Spirit’. The other readings of the Temple image which its context in the Book of Kells suggests – its allusion to the individual baptised and to the new Chosen People – explore the implications of the central theme and so lead to a renewed and more profound understanding of ‘the body of Christ’ as the incorporation of the faithful into the sacramental and mystical Body of Christ which transcends time and encompasses the Tabernacle, the Temple, the Church on earth and the heavenly sanctuary.⁸¹ [355]

80 B. Kühnel, ‘Jewish symbolism of the Temple and the Tabernacle and Christian symbolism of the Holy Sepulchre and the heavenly Tabernacle’ in *Jewish Art* 12/13 (1986–87) 147–68, 152.

81 Sections omitted here explore the significance of the priestly figure shown within the Temple image, the idea of the Ark as a synecdochal representation of the Temple and compare the Book of Kells’ use of scriptural metaphors of living stones, pillars, cornerstone etc. with their depiction in Anglo-Saxon mss. Finally, some of the scriptural and exegetical themes discussed in the paper are closely related to accounts of insular monastic life and Columban spirituality to suggest that a monastic reader familiar with Scripture through the liturgy and *lectio divina* might find in the Kells Temple picture both an image of the divine dwelling-place and an aid to meditation on the divine in-dwelling.

THE BOOK OF KELLS, FOLIOS 29 AND 34

Insular gospel books, which were also precious liturgical objects, characteristically apply motifs from the traditions of Celtic and Saxon fine metalwork to the decoration of the written word, most notably in display scripts at the opening of the sacred text. In the Book of Kells the native repertoire of abstract ornament (curvilinear patterns of trumpets, peltas and spirals; rectilinear fret and step patterns; ribbon and zoomorphic interlace; highly stylised animals) is combined with imports from the representational art of the Mediterranean world, such as vine-scrolls, lions, peacocks and human figures. Different categories of ornament, which are clearly defined and separated as if within the cell-walls of a piece of precious metalwork in other Insular gospel books, occasionally overspill their boundaries in the Book of Kells. The framing bands which outline the individual letter forms and delineate their panels of ornament also help unify the whole design by their colour and line.

The first page of St Matthew's gospel (fol. 29) bears only two words, *Liber generationis*, yet is almost illegible (Plate 8.1). The circular bosses, curves and spinning spirals of *Liber* are counterpoised by the rectangular multiple frames holding *generationis*. The first syllable, *Lib*, forms a sweeping ligature which spans the entire page, its last letter encircling the second syllable. Below, the shrunken word *gene/rati/onis* is divided into three lines with letter forms of almost runic obscurity; two lines are shown in orange letters on purple and the centre line in purple on orange. Such use of colour, like the decorative outlining of *Lib* and the ornamental encrustation not only of the letters but of the spaces between them, creates ambiguity between words and frames, foreground and background. This display script, in which text dissolves and becomes image, has been described as sacred calligraphy. Discerning the form of the words, whose letters are distorted in shape and relative size and veiled by the ornament, provides some visual analogy to the monastic practice of *lectio divina* in which the reader meditatively seeks the spiritual meaning concealed beneath the literal text of the Scriptures.

Matthew 1:1–17, beginning with the words *Liber generationis* (the Book of the Generation/Genealogy), records Christ's human lineage from the royal house of Judah. The following verse begins the account of the Incarnation, which stresses Christ's divine as well as his human nature. Patristic and Insular biblical



Plate 8.1 The Book of Kells. 'Genealogy of Christ', Matthew 1:1. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. Fol. 29r.



Plate 8.2 The Book of Kells. Reconstitution of the probable original layout: cross with the eight medallions and the sacred monogram page facing each other, forming a single composition. The Board of Trinity College Dublin. Fols. 33r, 34r.

commentators customarily linked the account of Christ's human birth announced in Matthew 1:18 with his identification as the divine Creator at the opening of John's gospel. The Latin text of Matthew 1:18 begins with Christ's name, in which commentators believed his identity was symbolically made known. It is a characteristic feature of Insular gospel books that they embellish the opening of this text to equal or even surpass the decorated opening of the gospel itself. In the Book of Kells fol. 34 only the first three words of Matthew 1:18 are shown: *Christi autem (h) generatio* (Plate 7.5, Plate 8.2). The second and third words are written in Insular majuscule script and lie almost unnoticed at the bottom of the page. The first word, *Christi*, is shown through the customary form XP, derived from the Greek letters *chi* and *rho*, which are the first two letters of the Greek title *Christ* (*Messiah* in Hebrew, meaning 'the Anointed One'). The Kells artist has transformed this ancient pictorial convention of abbreviation of the sacred name so that the initial letter embraces the whole page. The four curved arms of the *chi* radiate from a great central lozenge and terminate in spools of Celtic spirals and roundels; the much smaller letter *rho* and the Latin ending 'i' stem from extensions of an equilateral cross. A foreshortened diagonal version of this golden cross appears in the rhombus or lozenge at the heart of the *chi*.

The page teems with life. It is inhabited by creatures of earth, air and water: within the lozenge, an ancient image of the quadripartite cosmos, are four tiny human figures; to the left of the *chi* are moths and angels and at the bottom of the page are cats and mice and a black otter with a fish in its jaws. Even the interlace ornament is formed from vine-scrolls and stylised birds, serpents, quadrupeds and humans. The decoration of the text of Christ's birth suggests the identification of Christ incarnate and mortal with Christ the Creator-Logos. Christ as the Logos or divine Word is here revealed in a word, in a single letter, concealed within the design. Similarly, monastic commentators meditating on his name at this point in Matthew's gospel, described his divinity as lying hidden in his creation, beneath his human flesh at his Incarnation and beneath the literal letter of the scriptural text.

TWO PAGES FROM THE BOOK OF KELLS

One of the principal tools of the history of art is *iconography*, the study of symbols and narratives in visual art. As a method, iconography can be demanding and exact. The art historian Erwin Panofsky pictured ‘iconographical analysis’ as leading to a more general understanding of culture, historical processes and ‘intrinsic meaning’.

This brief chapter gives the flavour of an iconographical analysis: it is a kind of close reading, bent on precision and thoroughness. It also hints at the wider reading of the manuscript’s significance.

Introduction

Insular gospel books, which were also precious liturgical objects, characteristically apply motifs from the traditions of Celtic and Saxon fine metalwork to the decoration of the written word, most notably in display scripts at the opening of the sacred text. In the Book of Kells the native repertoire of abstract ornament (curvilinear patterns of trumpets, petals and spirals; rectilinear fret and step patterns; ribbon and zoomorphic interlace; highly stylised animals) is combined with imports from the representational art of the Mediterranean world, such as vine-scrolls, lions, peacocks and human figures.

Different categories of ornament, which are clearly defined and separated as if within the cell-walls of a piece of precious metalwork in other Insular gospel books, occasionally overspill their boundaries in the Book of Kells. The framing bands which outline the individual letter forms and delineate their panels of ornament also help unify the whole design by their color and line.

Folio 29

The first page of St Matthew’s gospel (fol. 29r in the manuscript, Plate 8.1) bears only two words, *Liber generationis*, yet is almost illegible. The [165] circular bosses, curves and spinning spirals of *Liber* are counterpoised by the rectangular multiple frames holding *generationis*. The first syllable, *Lib*, forms a sweeping ligature which spans the entire page, its last letter encircling the second syllable, *er*. [166]

Below, the shrunken word *gene/rati/onis* is divided into three lines with letter forms of almost runic obscurity; two lines are shown in orange letters on purple and the centre line in purple on orange.

This display script, in which text dissolves and becomes image, has been described as sacred calligraphy. Discerning the form of the words, whose letters are distorted in shape and relative size and veiled by the ornament, provides some visual analogy to the monastic practice of *lectio divina* in which the reader meditatively seeks the spiritual meaning concealed beneath the literal text of the Scriptures.

Significance of the page

Matthew 1:1–17, beginning with the words *Liber generationis* (the Book of the Generation, or Genealogy), records Christ's human lineage from the royal house of Judah. The following verse begins the account of the Incarnation, which stresses Christ's divine as well as his human nature. Patristic and Insular biblical commentators customarily linked the account of Christ's human birth and consequent mortality announced in Matthew 1:18 with his identification as the divine Creator at the opening of John's gospel. The text begins with Christ's name, in which commentators believed his identity was symbolically made known. It is a characteristic feature of Insular gospel books that they embellish the opening of this text to equal or even surpass the decorated opening of the gospel itself.

Folio 34

In the Book of Kells fol. 34, shown in Plate 7.5, only the first three words of Matthew 1:18 are shown: *Christi autem (h) generatio*. The second and third words are written in Insular majuscule script and lie almost unnoticed at the bottom of the page. The first word, *Christi*, is shown through the customary form XP, derived from the Greek letters *chi* and *rho*, which are the first two letters of the Greek title Christ (Messiah, 'the Anointed One').

The Kells artist has transformed this ancient pictorial convention of abbreviation of the sacred name so that the initial letter embraces the whole page. The four curved arms of the *chi* radiate from a great central lozenge and terminate in spools of Celtic spirals and roundels; the much smaller letter *rho* and the Latin ending 'i' stem from extensions of an equilateral cross. A foreshortened diagonal version of this golden cross appears in the rhombus or lozenge at the heart of the *chi*. [167]

Details

The page teems with life. It is inhabited by creatures of earth, air and water: within the lozenge, an image of the quadripartite cosmos, are four tiny human figures; to the left of the *chi* are moths and angels and at the bottom of the page [168] are cats and mice and a black otter with a fish in its jaws. Even

the interlace ornament is formed from vine-scrolls and stylised birds, serpents, quadrupeds and humans.

The decoration of the text of Christ's birth suggests the identification of Christ incarnate with Christ the Creator-Logos. Christ as the divine Word is here revealed in a word, in a single letter, concealed within the design. Similarly, commentators meditating on his name at this point in Matthew's gospel, described his divinity as lying hidden in his creation, beneath his human flesh at his Incarnation and beneath the literal letter of the scriptural text.

What would be next?

A student of Insular manuscripts would study a wide range of images like these, to build a sense of why they were made, how they developed and what they signified. Images in art history are rarely studied in isolation, even though they are sometimes shown that way in galleries.

For further reading

Bernard Meehan, *An Illustrated Introduction to the Manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994); Carol Ann Farr, *The Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience* (London: British Library, 1997). [169]

THE BOOK OF KELLS, FOLIO 114

The Book of Kells, fol. 114, is a rare example among early medieval Latin gospel books of a figural image positioned within the gospel text (Plate 5.1). Its depiction of Christ, standing between two figures who hold his raised arms, has often been seen as an illustration of his arrest, but a number of features question or qualify this understanding.¹ First, the picture appears some five pages *before* Matthew's words: 'Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and held him' (Matthew 26:50). Moreover, the text on the verso of the picture, the beginning of Jesus's prophecy of his Passion and Resurrection before going with his disciples to Gethsemane to pray (Matthew 26:31), is enlarged, ornamented and framed.

Second, the picture is not a narrative illustration of one event but a monumental hieratic image. The orant pose of Christ, set between two crosses which form the capitals of a magnificent arch, evokes the crucifixion; the letter *chi*, the Greek initial of his sacred title *Christ* (Messiah), is revealed in the diagonal cross formed by his arms and legs.² The composition radically renews early Christian iconographic conventions, deriving from the art of Late Antiquity, in which the exalted Christ, often represented by the triumphal cross or the christogram, is manifested beneath an honorific arch or symmetrically flanked and sometimes touched by attendant figures or creatures.

Third, the inscription overhead provides a further aid to interpretation: 'And a hymn being said, they went out to Mount Olivet' (Matthew 26:30). The words conclude Matthew's account of the Last Supper. The preceding page [49] of text (Plate 3.2), which faces the picture, consists entirely of Christ's institution of the Eucharist and allusion to the risen life of which it is a foretaste (Matthew 26:26–29). The Book of Kells has the 'mixed Irish text' of the gospel, incorporating Old Latin or pre-Vulgate readings, but there is an insertion in Matthew 26:26 on this page which is not paralleled in other Insular gospel books and probably represents a

1 George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells: The Insular Gospel-books 650–800* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 162–63; Carol A. Farr, *The Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience* (London: The British Library, 1977), pp. 104–34.

2 Suzanne Lewis, 'Sacred Calligraphy: The Chi-Rho Page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36 (1980), pp. 139–59.

liturgical reminiscence. It occurs in the words of Christ, when he took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to his disciples: 'Take and eat this all of you. This is my body which is broken for the life of the world (*quod confringitur pro saeculi vita*)'. The verb *confringere* is not found in the Roman canon of the Mass but appears in other early liturgical contexts in the western rite. St Ambrose's treatise on the sacraments, for example, quotes the commemoration of the institution of the sacrament in the Mass prayers as *hoc est enim corpus meum, quod pro multis confringetur*.³ The Irish Stowe Missal has the Roman canon, but one of the prayers or confessions of faith at the breaking of the bread speaks of the breaking of Christ's body (*in hac confractione corporis*).⁴

The Stowe Missal has a fixed lection beginning: 'As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show forth the Lord's death till he come' (I Corinthians 11:26). The belief, developed by the fathers and expressed in the liturgy, that the Passion and Resurrection are made present at the eucharistic altar, and that through the breaking of bread the faithful partake of the Body of Christ and become one body with him (I Corinthians 10:16–17), came to be expressed through detailed parallelism in which bringing the offering of the paten and chalice to the altar calls to mind Christ being brought to his Passion. In the Irish commentary on the Mass appended to the Stowe Missal, the breaking of the host is a figure of the seizure of Christ, the host on the paten his flesh on the cross, the fraction on the paten the body of Christ broken with nails and spear.⁵

The enigmatic gesture of the attendant robed figures in Kells, who lay their hands on Christ's outstretched arms, may be reminiscent of the liturgical ceremony of *sustentatio*, derived from imperial ceremonial and described in the earliest Roman ordines. Two flanking deacons support [51] the outstretched arms of the vested celebrant, who bears the priestly role of Christ, as he enters the sanctuary, at the offertory and at the communion.⁶ In the Book of Kells the attendant figures are flanked by two columns ornamented with vines rising from chalices, an early Christian motif representing the eucharistic and eschatological incorporation of the faithful into Christ (John 15:5). Christ is robed in red; his high priestly gesture of oblation offers a visual exposition of the means by which the fruits of his life-giving offering continue to be received. His gaze invites the faithful to draw near. At a critical juncture in the gospel text the image dwells on the mystery of the body of Christ, at once crucified, exalted and sacramental. [52]

3 *De sacramentis* IV, 5.21.

4 See Martin McNamara, 'The Eucharist in the Stowe Missal: Words and Actions in the Mass Figures, Symbols of Higher Truths', in *Treasures of Irish Christianity: People and Places, Images and Texts*, eds. Salvador Ryan and Brendan Leahy (Dublin: Veritas, 2012), pp. 57–59.

5 *The Stowe Missal*, George F. Warner, ed. Vol. II.3 (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1915), p. 41.

6 Jennifer O'Reilly, 'The Book of Kells, Folio 114r: A Mystery Revealed Yet Concealed', *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, eds. R. M. Spearman and John Higgitt (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 106–14; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, "'Traditio evangeliorum' and 'sustentatio': The Relevance of Liturgical Ceremonies to the Book of Kells", *The Book of Kells*, ed. Felicity O'Mahony (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 399–436 (417–22).

THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF KELLS

The Book of Kells is unique among surviving illuminated Insular gospel books in its multiple depictions of eucharistic symbols, notably vine-scrolls and chalices, which are often shown accompanied by peacocks. Such images were derived from the Christian art of the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity, but were visually transformed and theologically revitalised when they were assimilated into the Book of Kells, c. 800.¹

Folio 32v: the heavenly liturgy

Peacocks had survived their pagan classical origins as celestial and funerary symbols and images of immortality, to appear in Christian funerary and liturgical art as symbols of paradise. The depiction of a chalice and vine-scrolls with peacocks could therefore allude not only to the Eucharist, but to the heavenly paradisaical life which the Eucharist anticipates. Peacocks were generally shown in pairs, flanking Christ, who was represented symbolically by the abstract sign of the Cross or the *chi-rho*, formed from the Greek initial letters of his sacred title, *Christos*.

The sacramental and eschatological significance of this motif is profoundly renewed in the Book of Kells, fol. 32v, by its context in a full-page figural image of the risen and glorified body of Christ, shown enthroned in heavenly glory beneath an honorific arch.² A small golden cross is set above his head, which is flanked by paired peacocks, vines and chalices. In an inspired departure from

1 The Book of Kells, Dublin, Trinity College Library, A.I.6 (58). The exact date and place of origin remain uncertain. Peter Fox, *The Book of Kells*, 2 vols. (Verlag: Lucerne 1990), facsimile and commentary; for reproductions and commentary see Françoise Henry, *The Book of Kells*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974; Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1994. For discussion of the manuscript in its insular contexts, see George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells. The Insular Gospel*, books 650–800, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987, pp. 130–98.

2 Reproduced in Henry, *Book of Kells*, pl. 26; Meehan, *Book of Kells*, fig. 63; J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts, 6th to the 9th Century*, London: Harvey Miller, 1978, catalogue no. 52, fig. 243. Carol A. Farr, 'Cosmological and eschatological images in the Book of Kells: folios 32v and 114r', *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image*, Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully, eds., Cork: Cork University Press, 2011, pp. 291–301, pl. 34.

Mediterranean practice, the two peacocks turn their gaze downwards and direct our attention to the cross-inscribed white discs in the pattern of their wings; the discs visually suggest eucharistic hosts and thereby amplify the allusion to the sacramental body of Christ made by the vines and chalices. Attendant angels about the divine throne evoke the perpetual heavenly liturgy; so, at the altar of the Eucharist, the [52] community of the Church on earth joins with the heavenly host in offering the praise of the Sanctus.³

Folio 19v

Vines, chalices and peacocks occur throughout the manuscript, but are not always so immediately recognisable. In the prefatory pages of the Book of Kells the first entry in the summary of the contents of Luke's Gospel begins on fol. 19v with the name of the elderly priest who stands at the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem at the opening of the gospel (Luke 1:5–11) and whose story forms an integral part of Luke's account of the coming of Christ. The first five letters of his name, Zacharias, are displayed on an ornamented panel and occupy the whole width of the page.⁴ Closer inspection reveals that the four letters following the magnified initial 'Z' are formed of stylised animals, who are joined by a golden bird. They are all entwined in a grapevine and feed on its fruit.

The image of the life-giving vine had been appropriated in early Christian art, sometimes depicted as issuing from a chalice, with small birds below reaching up to eat its fruit, and sometimes shown on a monumental scale as a tree of life spanning earth and heaven, with the birds and animals of all creation lodged in its branches. It could denote the sacramental feeding of all the faithful, nourishing their hope in eternal life, and also their incorporation into the body of Christ, the true vine (John 15:1–6). In the Book of Kells, fol. 19v, the traditional image is concealed from the casual glance by its novel context and orientation and by the intricacy of its ornamental form. But the initiated reader who lingers over the word and gradually discerns a vine stemming from a chalice and growing horizontally across the width of the panel, sustaining the creatures who form the name of Zacharias, receives a shock of recognition. The apparently incongruous juxtaposition of the inhabited vine and the name of the last of the priests of Aaron's line mentioned in Scripture before the Incarnation, suddenly offers an insight into the nature of the new priestly sacrifice offered by Christ.

Because Luke's Gospel opens prophetically with a priest at the altar in the Temple, it was particularly identified with the priesthood of Christ and with his Passion, and commentators assigned the ox [53] or calf, which had Old Testament associations as a priestly sacrificial victim, to St Luke as his evangelist symbol.

3 In the present pagination of the manuscript, fol. 32v precedes the richly ornamented cross-carpet and *chi-rho* pages, which announce the Incarnation at Matthew 1:18.

4 Henry, *Book of Kells*, pl. 14, 103; Meehan, *Book of Kells*, figs. 10, 69.

Hiberno-Latin writers were thoroughly familiar with these traditions, and also with the New Testament and patristic interpretation of Christ as the new high priest, ‘after the order of Melchisedech’, who offered himself as a unique and perfect sacrifice, superseding the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron and its repeated propitiatory offerings of blood sacrifices (Hebrews 5:6; 7:11; 9:11–12).⁵

In the Book of Kells these ideas are not illustrated in a literal or didactic manner, as for the uninformed. The images presuppose familiarity with a *living* tradition of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, sanctified in the New Testament and used in the liturgy, the monastic office and *lectio divina*, in patristic and insular biblical commentaries and many other genres, including homilies, hymns and hagiography. Using the visual equivalent of the rhetorical techniques employed by exegetes to engage the reader who seeks the underlying spiritual significance of the literal text of Scripture, much of the prodigious illumination in the Book of Kells entices the meditative viewer – by means of allusions, paradox, variety, surprise and delight – to puzzle out and recognise known truths with a deeper insight.

Folios 200r–202r the priestly genealogy of Christ and his people

The sacramental theme begun with the ornamentation of Zacharias’ name is continued in the illumination of Luke’s account of Christ’s human genealogy. In Luke’s Gospel the list of Christ’s human ancestors is a priestly as well as a royal genealogy and, significantly, it is positioned immediately after Christ’s baptism, where his identity as the Son of God is affirmed by the Father (Luke 3:22). In the Book of Kells the ancestral names in the genealogy (Luke 3:23–38) are decoratively set out over five pages, with a line for each entry (fols. 200r–202r). Some of the names are visually glossed, revealing that it is also the genealogy of the Church, the whole people of God.⁶

Folio 201v

On fol. 201v the listing of the names of ‘Jacob, who was the son [54] of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham’, is accompanied by a small figure who is seated above the name of Abraham (Plate 7.2).⁷ He is reclining with his legs drawn up, as at table, and raises a cup or chalice, to drink from it. The three patriarchs, who repeatedly represent God’s original chosen people in the Old Testament, were distinguished by God’s promise to Abraham: ‘And in your seed all the tribes of the earth will be blessed’ (Gn 12:3; cf. 17:5; 22:18), a promise literally fulfilled in

⁵ Genesis 14:18; Psalms 109 (110):4; Hebrews 4:14–16 and chapters 5; 7–9.

⁶ Henry, pl. 63–67. Jennifer O’Reilly, ‘Exegesis and the Book of Kells: The Lucan genealogy’, *The Book of Kells*, Felicity O’Mahony, ed., Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994, pp. 344–97, pl. 37–43.

⁷ Henry, pl. 66, Meehan, fig. 50.

the birth of Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob, the father of the eponymous ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. But the promise was interpreted by St Paul (Galatians 3:16) as having been spiritually fulfilled in the birth of Christ and in the formation of the Church, not just from the literal descendants of Abraham, from whom Christ took his human flesh, but from all the tribes of the earth: 'for by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or gentiles, whether bond or free: and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink' (I Corinthians 12:13).⁸

Patristic commentators on the genealogy quote Christ's prophecy: 'Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down (*recumbent*) with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 8:11). This text was directly associated in exegesis and liturgy with the heavenly banquet and with Christ's promise to drink the fruit of the vine with his disciples in his Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29).⁹ These biblical images of the formation of the ecclesial body of the new chosen people of God through baptism were applied by insular writers to their own society. The text about sitting down with the patriarchs had been quoted centuries before the Book of Kells by St Patrick in each of his epistles. He refers to those coming from east and west to join Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and 'banquet with Christ' in the heavenly kingdom and identifies them with recent converts in Ireland, anointed with chrism, 'a people newly coming to belief whom the Lord took from the uttermost parts of the earth as long ago he promised through his prophets'. Patrick shows the prophecy of Hosea 1:10 has been fulfilled through their baptism and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them: 'Those who were not my people I will call "my people" [. . .] they will be called "sons of the living God"'. Consequently, then, in Ireland, they who had never had knowledge of God [. . .] have lately been made a people of the Lord and called the children of God'.¹⁰ [55]

Folios 201v–202r

In the Book of Kells the page bearing the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob faces the final page of the Lucan priestly genealogy of Christ, which is also the spiritual genealogy of the whole Church. At the bottom of the page, fol. 201v, is a winged calf, priestly sacrificial victim and Luke's evangelist symbol; it directs attention to the ornamented panel which forms the end-piece of the genealogy on the facing page, fol. 202r (Plate 7.3).¹¹ In the context of discussing the

8 For early exegesis on the theme see, for example, G.W. Barkley, trans., *Origen: Homilies on Leviticus*, Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 1990, Homily 7.2, p. 137.

9 The names of the three patriarchs, in allusion to Matthew 8:11 and the heavenly banquet, are cited, for example, in a Mass for the dead in the Irish Stowe Missal, c. 800: F.E. Warren, *The Ritual and Liturgy of the Celtic Church*, Oxford, 1881, 248.

10 *Confessio*, 39, 40; *Epistola ad milites Corotici*, 18: Daniel Connelly, *The Letters of St Patrick*, Maynooth: An Sagart, 1993, 42–43, 71–72; 56, 80, Latin text and translation.

11 Henry, pl. 66–67, 109; Meehan, fig. 70.

Lucan priestly genealogy and the revelation of Christ as a priest ‘after the order of Melchisedech’, St Ambrose’s influential commentary had noted that the calf always points to this sacerdotal mystery.¹² The ornamented panel to which the calf points in the Book of Kells is not simply a decorative space-filler, but alludes to the priestly sacrifice of Christ. It depicts a pair of peacocks next to vine-scrolls stemming from a chalice. The Mediterranean motif, wonderfully translated into an abstract, two-dimensional insular idiom of highly stylised interlacing forms, signifies the sacramental body of Christ and the hope of eternal life which will sustain all the people of God.¹³

Commenting on Luke’s account of Christ’s baptism and anointing with the Holy Spirit, which prefigures the descent of the Holy Spirit on the whole Church at Pentecost, Ambrose pictured the growth, composition and calling of the Church. He did so by means of the biblical and patristic tradition of expounding the abiding spiritual significance of the historical temple built by Solomon in the earthly Jerusalem, a tradition familiar to insular commentators. Expounded in its many contexts in the literal text of Scripture the Temple may variously and simultaneously apply figuratively to Christ himself (John 2:19–21), ‘who became the temple of God by assuming human nature’, to his ecclesial body, the universal Church, each of whose individual members becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit at baptism (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:16; Romans 8:11), and to the heavenly life of all.¹⁴ Ambrose cited the key texts from I Peter 2 and Ephesians 2 to describe not only priests and bishops, but all the members of the body of Christ, ‘as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices’ (I Peter 2:5); drawn from all peoples, Jew and Gentile, it is ‘built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, being framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom [56] you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit’ (Ephesians 2:20–22).¹⁵

Folios 202v–203r: the spiritual temple

In the Book of Kells an extraordinary image on the verso of the last page of the genealogy presents the body of Christ through this metaphor of the living temple (Plate 7.4). The distinctive shape of the Temple in Jerusalem in the picture is probably derived from that of an early Irish church or house-shaped shrine, but it evokes an invisible spiritual building, encompassing past, present and future and

12 Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, CCSL 14, 83.

13 Henry, pl. 67, 109; Meehan, fig. 70.

14 See, for example, Bede’s magisterial commentary *De templo*, CCSL 119A, 147–48, Seán Connolly, trans., *Bede: On the Temple*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999, pp. 5–6; Introduction, xvii–xxxiii.

15 For Christ as the cornerstone see also Psalm 117:22; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Romans 9:33.

still in the course of being built up. The Temple is pictured surmounted by the bust-length figure of Christ, who is its head and cornerstone, and the individual 'living stones' below, built into its fabric, are formed by rows of small figures who are members of Christ's body on earth. The image faces a page bearing the words *Iesus autem plenus spiritus sancto*, 'Jesus full of the Holy Spirit', which begin the verse that immediately follows the genealogy in Luke's Gospel (Plate 6.2). The verse goes on to describe how 'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit', returned from his baptism in the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert (Luke 4:1), where he was to withstand the temptations of the devil, the last being the challenge to cast himself off from a pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 4:2–14).

The opening words alone are isolated and enlarged to fill the whole page, which is framed and heavily ornamented, so that the brief text acts as a *titulus* for the facing picture of the Temple as the body of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ It is a living temple, partly on earth and partly in heaven, where it will eventually receive its completion. Meanwhile, its members on earth, associated with the divine nature, are called to be a fit dwelling for the Holy Spirit, perfecting the gifts of the Spirit to remain vigilant under Christ against the continuing attacks of the devil expelled at their baptism.¹⁷

Folio 114r: the mystery of the body of Christ

Like the image of the unity of Christ and his Church, depicted as the spiritual temple on fol. 202v in Luke's Gospel, the image of Christ flanked and touched by two human figures on fol. 114r in Matthew's Gospel is a very rare example among early medieval Latin gospel books of a figural image positioned within the gospel text (Plate 5.1). [57]

It has often been described as an illustration of the arrest of Christ, but several features question this identification.¹⁸ The picture is placed, for example, five pages before Matthew's account of the arrest begins 'Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and held him' (Matthew 26:50), a passage which is not visually highlighted in any way. The few words on the verso of the picture, however, are enlarged to fill the whole page and are ornamented and framed. They signal the beginning of his Passion, for they are the opening words spoken by Christ *before*

16 Henry, pl. 68–69; Meehan, fig. 6.

17 For further discussion of fol. 202v and the temple, see George Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, pp. 168–74; O'Reilly, 'Exegesis and the Book of Kells: The Lucan genealogy', pp. 358–97; Carol A. Farr, *The Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience*, London: British Library, 1997, pp. 51–103.

18 This final section, like the brief entry on the Book of Kells, fol. 114r, in *The Treasures of Irish Christianity*, Salvador Ryan and Brendan Leahy, eds, Dublin: Veritas, 2012, draws in part on research more fully discussed and documented in Jennifer O'Reilly, 'The Book of Kells, folio 114: A Mystery Revealed yet Concealed', *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Britain and Ireland*, John Higgitt and R. M. Spearman, eds., Stroud: Alan Sutton and National Museums of Scotland, 1993, pp. 106–14.

going with his disciples to Gethsemane, announcing the imminent fulfilment of prophecy in the desertion of the disciples that night: *Tunc dicit illis Ihs [Iesus] omnes vos scan[dalum]* (Matthew 26:31).¹⁹

Secondly, it seems unlikely that the picture simply depicts the arrest because its whole character is not that of a narrative illustration of an event in time, but of a timeless hieratic image. The two men who symmetrically flank the monumental figure of Christ are shown unarmed and robed, not in the short tunics of soldiers at the arrest; their legs are seen in profile, moving inwards, as though they are being drawn to Christ. They are not identical but shown to be in close harmony. The composition radically renews early Christian iconographic conventions in which the exalted Christ, usually represented by the abstract sign of the Cross or the *chi-rho*, is manifested beneath an honorific arch or is symmetrically flanked and sometimes touched by attendant figures or creatures shown in profile. Some early Christian and insular representations of the crucifixion show Christ standing with arms outstretched in cruciform or orans posture, but without the cross itself being shown. In the Book of Kells image Christ is set in frontal, orant pose between the two crosses which prominently form the capitals of the arch, evoking the crucifixion. The X-shaped letter *chi*, the Greek initial of his sacred title Christ, 'the anointed one', which is a recurring symbol throughout the manuscript, sometimes hidden, sometimes overt, is concealed in the diagonal cross formed by his splayed arms and legs, highlighted in blue.²⁰

The inscription overhead but within the picture provides a further aid to its interpretation: 'And a hymn being said, they went out to the Mount of Olives' (Matthew 26:30). The words conclude Matthew's account of the Last Supper. [58]

The preceding text has been carefully arranged so that the page which faces the picture on fol. 114r consists entirely of Christ's institution of the Eucharist and his allusion to the risen life of which it is the foretaste (Matthew 26:26–29): 'I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom'.

The Book of Kells has the 'mixed Irish text' of the gospel, incorporating Old Latin or pre-Vulgate readings, but there is an insertion in Matthew 26:26 on this page, fol. 113v, which is not paralleled in other Insular gospel books and probably represents a liturgical reminiscence. It occurs in the words of Christ, when he took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to his disciples: 'Take and eat this all of you. This is my body *which is broken for the life of the world (quad confringitur pro saeculi vita)*'. The verb *confringere* is not found in the Roman Canon of the Mass but appears in other early liturgical contexts in the western rite. St Ambrose's treatise on the sacraments, for example, quotes the commemoration of

19 Fols. 114r–114v reproduced in Henry, *Book of Kells*, pl. 45, 46; Meehan, *Book of Kells*, figs. 54, 57. See Carol A. Farr, *The Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience*, pp. 104–39, and 'Cosmological and Eschatological images in the Book of Kells: folios 32v and 114r', pp. 297–301.

20 Suzanne Lewis, 'Sacred Calligraphy: The *Chi-rho* Page in the Book of Kells', *Traditio* 36 (1980) pp. 139–59.

the institution of the sacrament in the Mass prayers as *hoc est enim corpus meum, quod pro multis confringetur*.²¹ The eclectic Irish Stowe Missal has the Roman Canon, but one of the prayers or confessions of faith at the breaking of the bread speaks of the breaking of Christ's body: *Credimus in hac confractione corporis et effusione sanguinis nos esse redemptos*.²² In the Kells text Christ's blood is 'poured out for you and for many for the remission of sins'.²³

The Stowe Missal has a fixed lection beginning, 'As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show forth the Lord's death till he come' (I Corinthians 11:26). The belief, developed by the Fathers and expressed in the liturgy, that the Passion and Resurrection are made present at the eucharistic altar, and that through the breaking of bread the faithful partake of the body of Christ and become one body with him (I Corinthians 10:16–17), came to be expressed through detailed allegorical parallelism in which bringing the offering of the paten and chalice to the altar calls to mind Christ being brought to his Passion. In the Irish commentary on the Mass appended to the Stowe Missal, c. 800, the breaking of the host is seen as a figure of the seizing of Christ; the host on the paten is his flesh on the cross; the fraction on the paten is the breaking of the body of Christ broken with nails and spear.²⁴ [59]

Such 'signs of our salvation' had been pictured much earlier by the Fathers. Theodore of Mopsuestia, for example, had most vividly contrasted those who seized Christ with the deacons who represent the angels of the heavenly liturgy, invisibly present at every Mass:

We must think of Christ at one time being led to his passion, and at another time stretched out on the altar to be sacrificed for us. And when the offering which is to be placed [on the altar] is brought out in the sacred vessels of the paten and the chalice [by the deacons] we must think that Christ our Lord is being led and brought to his passion, not, however, by the Jews [. . .] but by the invisible hosts of ministry [. . .] who were present when the Passion of our Salvation was being accomplished.²⁵

The gesture of the two attendant robed figures in the Kells image, who lay their hands on Christ's outstretched arms, may carry a reminiscence of the liturgical

21 *De sacramentis* IV, 5, 21; J.A. Jungman, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origin and Development*, New York: Benziger, 1951, p. 52. The Kells text reads *Accipite edite ex hoc omnes. Hoc est enim corpus meum quod confringitur pro saeculi vita*.

22 F.L. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, Oxford, 1881, p. 241.

23 *Hic est enim sanguis meus novi testamenti qui effundetur pro vobis et pro multis in remissionem peccatorum*.

24 George F. Warner, ed., *The Stowe Missal*, vol. II, Henry Bradshaw Society 31, 1915, p. 41.

25 A. Mingana, trans., *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, Woodbrook Studies VI, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1933, pp. 85–86.

ceremony of *sustentatio*, which is described in the earliest Roman *ordines*. Two deacons support the outstretched arms of the celebrant, who bears the priestly role of Christ, as he enters the sanctuary, at the offertory and at the Communion.²⁶

In the Book of Kells the two columns which flank the two figures are ornamented with vines rising from chalices. As already seen, this was an early Christian motif representing the eucharistic and eschatological incorporation of the faithful into Christ. Christ, vested in human flesh, is robed in red; with his priestly gesture of oblation he both evokes his Passion and articulates the text on the facing page: 'Take, eat [. . .] This is my body which is broken for the life of the world'. The image and the facing text form a diptych, though the image is not a literal illustration of the Last Supper. Rather, it shows the sacramental means by which, since the Resurrection, Christ's life-giving offering continues to be received and it prompts further meditation on the mystery of the body of Christ, made present at every celebration of the Eucharist. His iconic gaze invites the faithful to draw near into union with him and with each other. [60]

26 O'Reilly, 'The Book of Kells, Folio 114: A Mystery Revealed yet Concealed', pp. 112–14; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, '*Traditio evangeliorum* and *sustentatio*: The Relevance of Liturgical Ceremonies to the Book of Kells', *The Book of Kells*, Felicity O'Mahony, ed., pp. 399–436; pp. 417–22.



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AN ANGLO-SAXON PORTABLE ALTAR

Inscription and iconography

Elisabeth Okasha and Jennifer O'Reilly

The portable altar which is the subject of this paper is preserved in the Musée de Cluny, Paris, catalogued as no. cl. 11.459.¹ It was bought by the Museum on 10 May 1886 at the sale of the Stein Collection. On 25 November 1882, while in the Stein Collection, the altar was drawn by C. Rohault de Fleury who took it to be Italian work of the thirteenth century.² He supplied the information that the altar had previously been in the possession of M. Maillet de Boullay and that it was said to have been purchased in Italy. The altar has been cited on a number of occasions and some commentators on the inscription have stated that the text describes the engraved figures; none, however, has attempted a translation or an explanation of which part of the text refers to which part of the engraving, nor has the iconography of the altar been discussed in any detail.³

1 The authors are grateful to the Director and staff of the Musée de Cluny for their help, and for permission to examine the altar. They also thank Professor É. Ó Carragáin and Dr J.D. C. Frendo of University College, Cork, Mrs L.E. Webster of the British Museum, and Dr Michael Lapidge of Cambridge University for their help.

2 C. Rohault de Fleury, *op. cit.*, n. 3 below.

3 List of references to the Cluny altar:

J. Adhemar and D. Sutton, eds., *Huit siècles de vie britannique à Paris*. Exhibition catalogue. Musée Galliera, Paris 1948, p. 63.

J. Braun, *Der Christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, I, Munich 1924, p. 451.

L.L. Brownrigg, 'MSS containing English decoration 871–1066, catalogued and illustrated: a review', *Anglo-Saxon England*, VII, Cambridge 1978, p. 253, n. 1.

James Campbell, ed., *The Anglo-Saxons*, Oxford 1982, pl. 181.

A.G.I. Christie, *English Medieval Embroidery*, Oxford 1938, p. 45.

C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art. A New Perspective*, Manchester 1982, pp. 80, 210 and figure.

C. Rohault de Fleury, *La Messe. Études archéologiques sur ses monuments*, v, Paris 1887, p. 38 and figures.

P. Lasko, 'An English Romanesque Portable Altar', *Apollo*, LXXIX 1964, p. 494.

H.P. Mitchell, 'Flotsam of later Anglo-Saxon Art – I', *Burlington Magazine*, XLII, 1923, pp. 63–72 and figures.



Plate 12.1 Portable altar. Paris, Musée de Cluny – Musée national du Moyen Âge.
Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais.

The altar measures $26.2 \times 13.7 \times 1.5$ cm. It is a precious object made of red porphyry backed with wood, framed and held together by engraved silver-gilt mounts (Plate 12.1). The upper and lower mounts project some 3.5 cm on to the face of the altar and show respectively the Crucifixion between an ox and an eagle, and the *Agnus Dei* flanked by an angel and lion. The left- and right-hand mounts extend some 2.5 cm on to the altar face.⁴ Each shows two figures, one above the other, identifiable as the Virgin and Gabriel on the left-hand mount and St John and Raphael on the right. Except for faces, hands and feet, and for the torso of Christ, all the figures are gilded. There is no trace on the reverse of the iconographic programme detailed by D. Talbot Rice.⁵ [32]

The inscription is contained in the edges of the altar, the letters being around 8 mm in height with framing lines above and below (Figure 12.1). The letters are incised and then inlaid with niello. The parts of the text on the two long edges are clearly legible. The text on the top edge is rather deteriorated with, in addition, pieces of the silver broken off. Much of the silver is lost from the bottom edge and what remains contains only illegible traces of lettering. The letters on the top and right-hand edges face the front of the altar while those on the left-hand edge face the back of the altar; it is not clear which way the traces of letters on the bottom edge faced. The text reads:⁶

Right-hand edge: +DISCIPVLVS PLORAT:RAPHAELQVEM:SEMP̄:ADORAT:+ |

Bottom: illegible

Left-hand edge: -NITRIX:MERET:GABRIEL:CVISC̄SADHERET:[±] |

Top: [I]NG[E·]T:HICLV[. . .]RORE[·]-

E. Okasha, 'A supplement to *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, XI, Cambridge 1982, pp. 95–96 and figure.

B.C. Raw, 'The Dream of the Rood and its Connections with Early Christian Art', *Medium Aevum*, XXXIX, 1970, p. 254, n. 11.

D. Talbot Rice, *English Art 871–1100*, Oxford 1952, pp. 251–53.

D.M. Wilson, *The Anglo-Saxons*. Ancient Peoples and Places xvi, London 1960, pp. 64, 163, 215 and figure.

Burlington Fine Arts Club Catalogue of an Exhibition of British Medieval Art, London 1939, no. 146, pp. 64–66.

4 Throughout, 'left-hand (side)' and 'right-hand (side)' are taken to be the left- and right-hand (sides) of an observer examining the front of the altar.

5 Talbot Rice, op. cit., n. 3, pp. 231–32. There is possibly a confusion here with another slender portable altar, also in the Musée de Cluny (cl. 13.072) and exhibited as eleventh-century German work, which is decorated on both sides, and shows a scene of the sacrifice of Abraham mentioned by Prof. Talbot Rice.

6 The text is transliterated according to the [. . .] indicates an indefinite number of letters lost in the text

A indicates a clearly legible letter A — indicates a complete loss of text at beginning

Δ indicates a letter damaged but legible as A or end

[A] indicates a damaged letter where the restoration to A is fairly certain | indicates the end of a line of text

[. . .] indicates three letters lost, the number corresponding to the number of dots : indicates a punctuation mark of any sort

— indicates an abbreviation mark of any sort

Deliberate spaces in the text are retained.

When the text is put together and divided into words it reads:

+DISCIPVLVS PLORAT : RAPHAEL QVEM : SEM̄ : ADORAT : +
 [. . .] NITRIX : MERET : GABRIEL : CUI SCS ADHERET :
 [+ I]NG[E ·]T : HIC LV [. . .]RORE[·]–

The text contains several dots amongst the letters, some of which were probably word division symbols and some of which were perhaps accidental: it is not always certain, however, which is which. The horizontal mark above the G of GABRIEL was presumably accidental or in error, while the horizontal marks in



Figure 12.1 Portable altar. The porphyry slab and silver marginal mounts. Paris, Musée de Cluny – Musée national du Moyen Âge. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais

the middle of the letter P of SEMP and of the letter C of SCS are abbreviation signs. The initial cross on the right-hand edge is of a conventional form but the other two crosses are unusual in shape.

Since it is common for Anglo-Saxon inscriptions to commence with a cross, the text probably begins with the right-hand edge, the only edge to start with a cross. The first sentence of the text is, therefore, *+discipulus plorat raphael quem semp adorat*, probably ‘+ the disciple mourns him whom Raphael always worships’. In this interpretation *semp* is taken to be an abbreviation for *semper* and the word order is presumably inverted to fit the metrical structure of the line. The first two words of this sentence are located adjacent to the figure taken as St John and must refer to his grief at the Crucifixion. The second part of the sentence is placed alongside the engraved figure of an angel, who is thus presumably to be identified as Raphael. The odd-shaped cross following *adorat* may be decorative or perhaps a space filler, to avoid starting a new part of the text, and a new metrical line, close to the end of one edge of the altar. [33]

The second sentence begins on the upper part of the left-hand side where a small portion of silver is broken off. It reads, *–nitrix meret gabriel cui scs adheret*, probably ‘the Mother mourns, to whom the holy Gabriel cleaves’. In this interpretation – *nitrix meret* is taken to be a form of *(ge)netrix maeret* and *scs* to be *sanctus*. The inverted word order is presumably again to fit the metrical structure of the line. The first two words are set alongside the engraved figure of the Virgin Mary and refer to her mourning during the Crucifixion. The second part of the sentence is located adjacent to the engraved figure of the second angel, thus presumably identifying him as Gabriel. The final cross is rather deteriorated but may have been of the same unusual shape as the final cross on the right-hand side; again, it may have been inserted as decoration or as a space filler. The text on the bottom edge is now completely illegible, but some letters can be made out on the top edge. It is not now clear which of these two parts of the text would have followed the second sentence. The text on the top edge begins, *(i)ng(e . . .)t hic lu–*. The first word could be *(i)ng(emi)t* ‘he/she mourns’, though it is not certain to whom this would refer. *Hic lu–* is set alongside the engraved ox, the symbol of St Luke, and might refer to the saint or his symbol. H. Mitchell read further text here, *pro rege* and *et ora*.⁷ A reading *(p)ro re(g)–* would indeed fit the remaining traces, although several other readings are possible; there is, however, no sign now of *et ora*.

If the interpretation of the text put forward here is substantially correct, the following question arises: why did the engraver set that portion of the text on the left-hand edge with its letters facing the back of the altar, while setting the top and right-hand edge with their letters facing the front of the altar? A possible explanation is that the engraver, or perhaps his literate overseer, was aware that the words were describing the pictures. Working in a logical manner, he engraved the figures before starting to engrave the explanatory text. Whether the mounts were engraved before or after having been nailed into position on the altar is irrelevant

7 Mitchell, *op. cit.* n. 3, p. 64.

to the present argument. When he engraved the first sentence no problem arose, since the words corresponded to the adjacent figures. When he came to engrave the left-hand edge, however, he noticed that the portion of the text referring to the Virgin would be beside Gabriel and that referring to Gabriel would be beside the Virgin. He therefore inverted the altar and engraved the second sentence so that the two portions were beside the figures they referred to, with the result that the letters faced the back of the altar.

It seems likely that such a long text would have been copied by the engraver from a written exemplar. Such an exemplar, however, could not have had the location of the figures and the corresponding parts of the text worked out in detail; had it had, the problem would surely have been rectified at that stage. It seems more likely that the somewhat confused situation presented by the altar is the result of problems which were recognised only during the engraving process.

Since the inscription is in Latin, no linguistic dating of the text is possible. The epigraphic dating evidence of the text supports the probable artistic dating of the altar to the eleventh century; it does not, however, suggest any more exact a date. The inscription from the left- and right-hand edges feature a bisyllabic leonine rhyme in each line (*plorat-orat, meret-adheret*), a metrical structure developed during the eleventh century,⁸ though [34] no example from an English author before the second quarter of the twelfth century has yet been found.⁹

The iconography

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Lacking external clues to provenance and date, the Cluny altar was assigned to twelfth-century Germany and even thirteenth-century Italy before Mitchell recognised the 'essential identity of manner' of the figures in the side mounts with Insular drawing.¹⁰ The altar's late Anglo-Saxon origins have not since been questioned, but its position within the period has. Although its animated figures do not have the formalised line of some Insular MSS from the eve of the Conquest, and do show broad similarities with much earlier works, suggestions that the Cluny altar dates from the late tenth century have not been elaborated.¹¹ Mitchell claimed it as Winchester work of the first quarter of the eleventh century after comparison with the New Minister Register fols. 6v–7r. The figures on both works are

8 F.J.E. Raby, *A History of Christian Latin Poetry from the beginning to the close of the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1953, pp. 27, 209; we are indebted to Dr B. F. Hamilton for this reference.

9 M. Lapidge, 'Some Latin poems as evidence for the reign of Athelstan', *Anglo-Saxon England*, IX, 1981, pp. 66–69.

10 Mitchell, *op. cit.* n. 3, p. 64.

11 Wilson, *op. cit.* n. 3; Talbot Rice, *op. cit.* n. 3, pp. 232–33 suggests c. 1000, but see n. 5; Dodwell, *op. cit.* n. 3, p. 210 says the altar 'survives from the late tenth century', but pl. 14 captions a detail of St John from the altar's right-hand mount, 'first half of the eleventh century' and p. 80 closely compares this with a figure in a Canterbury drawing 'also of the early eleventh century', Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana MS Plut. XVII. 20, fol. 1.

characterised by small heads, large hands, elongated bodies shown slightly turning on a cloudlike groundline, some with one bare foot and raised toes seen sideways and the other seen frontally from above; the attitudes are expressive, the draperies cross the legs diagonally and flutter at the hem. The right hand of the prone figure on fol. 7r is shown in reverse, as is the left hand of St John on the altar; fol. 6r, like the Cluny altar, uses several scales in the single composition, with Christ depicted as smaller than his symmetrically disposed earthly and heavenly worshippers.¹² Mitchell thought this MS was c. 1016–20 but it is now thought to be c. 1031, and comparison with the related Winchester MS B.L. Cotton Titus D. xxvii, c. 1023–35,¹³ further suggests the altar's stylistic affinities are with the second quarter of the eleventh century. The tiny upturned face of the monk on fol. 19v is drawn like that of the Virgin on the altar, and this page, together with fols. 65v and 75v, provide comparisons with the beaded haloes and eloquent hands of the altar's figures, the clusters of dots decorating plain areas of drapery and the looped curtain and beaded rim of the *Agnus Dei* medallion, though some features such as the angels' and St John's hair remain distinctive.

Although portable altars presumably existed in considerable numbers in a missionary, rural and monastic Church, few early medieval examples have survived. In the case of England the use of wood for portable altars 'probably remained normal throughout the Saxon period', despite continental reformers' insistence on marble or other seemly stone for the *mensa*.¹⁴ The metal mounts or casings which would have held some at least of these [35] wooden altars have also disappeared, though the existence of large quantities of precious metalwork in tenth- and early eleventh-century England is well documented. The foundation and refoundation of monasteries, especially in the 960s and 970s, required the provision of church plate and furnishings which royal, aristocratic and abbatial patrons lavishly supplied. However, there was a decrease in the production of silverwork during the half century or so before the Norman Conquest; danegelds and perhaps the overvaluation of coin in Aethelred's reign caused some melting down and the Norman invaders despoiled much that remained.¹⁵

The Cluny portable altar differs markedly from the other extant early Insular example, the tiny, silver-encased wooden altar of St Cuthbert.¹⁶ Closer in format are the two surviving Carolingian portable altars which also have a central porphyry slab bordered by metal mounts, but the eighth-century Adelhausen altar

12 B.L. Stowe 944, Elzbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (hereafter *A–S MSS*), London 1976, cat. 78, pls. 244, 247–48.

13 Also noted by Leslie Webster in a private communication. *A–S MSS*, cat. 77, pls. 243, 245–46.

14 C. Ralegh Radford, 'The Portable Altar of St Cuthbert' in C.F. Battiscombe, ed., *The Relics of St Cuthbert*, Oxford 1956, pp. 328–29. In a private communication C.J. Lynn notes that the Cluny altar slab is the only example of porphyry yet found in an Anglo-Saxon context.

15 Mitchell, op. cit. n. 3, pp. 69–72; Dodwell, op. cit. n. 3, pp. 188–217 and 'Losses of Anglo-Saxon Art in the Middle Ages', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, LVI, 1973, pp. 84–86 for examples of church plate and its loss.

16 Ralegh Radford, op. cit. n. 14; C. Thomas, *The Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain*, Oxford 1971, pp. 190–95.

has enamel plaques and no inscription or figural decoration, and Arnulf of Carinthia's portable altar c. 887–96, is elaborately canopied with sheet gold and chased reliefs and the altar stone itself is surrounded by polychrome enamels.¹⁷ Eleventh- and twelfth-century portable altars usually have the central slab and its surround (sometimes with the marginal mounts engraved and the edges inscribed, as in the Cluny example) mounted on a substantial base. The upright sides might carry figural decoration, commonly apostles, saints or prophets beneath arcading or between columns, or Christological scenes, which would extend the iconographic programme of any design on the upper face of the altar. Mounted on its base, such a portable altar resembles a monumental altar scaled down in miniature or a reliquary casket shrine of sarcophagus shape. The only extant twelfth-century English portable altar is of this type.¹⁸ Existing reliquaries were often incorporated. The marginal mounts of the Paderborn portable altar of c. 1100 or earlier, depict a portable altar which is raised up on a larger base; St Anselm as Archbishop of Canterbury (1093–1109) was to express grave reserves about consecrating or even keeping a portable altar slab separately from a proper base but a few slim portable altars without a casket base have survived.¹⁹

It is difficult to know what the Cluny altar originally looked like. The marginal mounts are now secured to the altar face by rows of large and numerous rivets piercing the finely incised lines which frame each of the four mounts. The rivets obtrude into the design which mars the engraver's trick, popular in late Anglo-Saxon drawings, of letting the figures occasionally break through the fragile constraints of their margins. At the top right-hand corner the framing lines of the upper and right-hand mounts run diagonally [36] more or less parallel to each other, but at the remaining three corners the incised lines partly overlap. Moreover, the upper and lower mounts are not positioned quite centrally. The four mounts extend beyond the face of the altar; they are folded over the thickness of its edge and project by a thin margin on to the underside where they are riveted to the entirely wooden backing. The excellent condition of the wood contrasts with the worn state of the metal mounts. Small plain mounts are riveted over the corners of the reverse side and a fragment of a fifth mount, with a shred of black cloth, remains in the centre. A laboratory investigation is needed but meanwhile some suggestions may be ventured. The altar may simply have been rebacked and the alignment of the

17 Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, Harmondsworth 1972, pls. 9, 58.

18 Lasko, op. cit., pl. 376 (reconstructed), also the portable altars of Svanhild c. 1070–75 (Melk), Gertrude c. 1030 (Cleveland), Roger of Helmarshausen 1100 (Paderborn), Eilbertus of Cologne c. 1130–40 (Berlin), pls. 136, 140, 161–62, 182–83, pp. 135–36; and H. Swarzenski, *Monuments of Romanesque Art. The Art of Church Treasures in N. Western Europe*, 2nd edn, London 1967, pls. 36, 102, 106.

19 S. Beissel, 'Der Tragaltar des Domschatzes zu Paderborn', *Zeitschrift für Christlichen Kunst*, Düsseldorf 1903, cols. 331–38, fig. 2; de Fleury, op. cit. n. 3, v, p. 17. The altar of Abbot Bégon III at Conques, dated by an inscription to 1100, is 26 cm long and made of silver, partly gilt, and niello framing a red porphyry stone, deeper but roughly comparable in format to the Cluny altar, Lasko, op. cit. n. 17, pl. 160.

mounts slightly displaced. The tip of the ox's halo and a small gilded patch over Christ's head extend on to the top edge of the altar, a further indication that the design was engraved before being nailed into its present position. The altar may well have had its present slim format originally, with relics beneath mounts on the reverse, or possibly with a metal casing or frame over the wooden backing. Alternatively, if less probably, it may have formed the top of a casket.

The absence of other known late Anglo-Saxon portable altars in particular and the extreme scarcity of contemporary Insular silverwork in general means that comparisons with the iconography of the Cluny altar must be sought in works of other media or provenance. The traditional components of the design – the Crucifixion, *Agnus Dei* and symbols of the evangelists – and peculiarities in their representation on the upper and lower mounts of the altar will here be discussed in turn, and then their relationship with the four lateral figures referred to in the inscription.

The Crucifixion

The victorious Christ awake on the Cross gradually began to yield to the image of the dead Christ in late tenth- and early eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon art.²⁰ The Crucifixion on the Cluny altar apparently illustrates this transition at an advanced stage. Christ's eyes are closed, his head and body slumped and legs bent, the arms hang below the horizontal and the hands droop with the thumbs closing down over the palms. The figure anticipates the image of the suffering Christ who was to become an increasingly popular subject of affective meditation during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Yet the Cluny figure expresses resignation rather than anguish; the pronounced contortion of the body on an abruptly abbreviated Cross must be partly explained by the confined space of the altar's upper mount, and the pose alone could offer only an approximate guide to dating as various types of the Crucified co-existed during the three-quarters of a century before the Conquest.²¹

Unlike the *crux florida* or palm-tree type of the *lignum vitae*, whose stylised tufts of foliage point in opposite directions along the two arms of the Tree/Cross,²² the notched beam of [37] the Cluny altar Cross is made of a single piece of roughly lopped timber. This motif had occasionally been incorporated in the common Carolingian and Ottonian Crucifixion image of the serpent coiled around the base of

20 The Sherborne Pontifical, Paris B.N. lat. 943, fol. 4, and the Winchester Psalter, B.L. Harley 2904, fol. 3v, both of the last quarter of the 10th century, already show Christ's eyes closed, his head inclined: *A-S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 35, 41, pls. 134, 142. The image of the dead Christ occurs in some Carolingian works, including the Utrecht Psalter, and may have had an Early Christian prototype. R. Hausserr, *Der tote Christus am Kreuz: zur Ikonographie des Gerokreuzes*, Diss. Bonn 1963.

21 The emotionally charged Crucifixion in the Arenberg Gospels, with Christ's body exaggeratedly curved and head slumped, predates by at least a quarter of a century BL Cotton Titus D. XXVII, fol. 65V, c. 1023–35, where the eyes and hands are open and the body remains virtually upright. *A-S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 56, 77, pls. 171, 246.

22 W.L. Hildburgh, 'On Palm-tree Crosses', *Archaeologia*, LXXXI, 1931, p. 51 for its appearance in sixth-century Monza ampullae.

the Cross to suggest that the dead timbers of the Cross become, in bearing Christ, the paradisaical Tree of Life and the antithesis of the Tree of Death in Eden, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The general concept was utterly familiar from exegesis, liturgy and hymns, but it remains debatable whether early medieval artists were specifically referring to the notion, familiar to the later Middle Ages in the legend of Seth, that the timber of the Cross was derived from the *lignum scientiae*.²³ Though the serpent very rarely appears in Anglo-Saxon drawings of the Crucifixion, the hewn timber cross does occur in four examples. Of these, Judith of Flanders's gospel book shows a Cross which, like that on the Cluny altar, is also *tau*-shaped, bearing a broadly comparable sagging figure of the dead Christ. It has often been argued that this frontispiece was added for Judith on her acquisition of the MS (c. 1051–64) but it may be original to the book which has stylistic affiliations not only with Winchester, but with Canterbury work of the second quarter of the eleventh century.²⁴ If so, this would provide an iconographic parallel for the Cluny Crucifixion closer to the date suggested by the altar's figural drawing than the three remaining examples of hewn timber crosses (which are all late, c. 1050–61). But there are significant differences between the Crucifixion scenes on the altar and in Judith's Gospels. The feet of the Cluny Christ are placed on a large *suppedeneum*, not nailed to the shaft, the *dextra Domini* (an almost standard component in Insular MS representations) and the sun and moon are omitted from the narrow upper mount, and the Cross is immediately flanked by two of the evangelist symbols, not by the Virgin and St John who form an intimate group with Christ in Judith of Flanders's gospels miniature. On the Cluny altar Mary and John standing to Christ's right and left, and gazing up at him, allude to the customary tableau at the foot of the Cross but they are produced, unusually, on a much larger scale below in the ampler picture area of the side mounts. Mary and John also appear on a larger scale than Christ and stand below a *tau*-shaped *crux florida* in the restrictive space of an initial in a gospel book produced at St Bertin c. 1000 under Anglo-Saxon and particularly Canterbury influence during the abbacy of Otbert.²⁵

Further and closer parallels to the Cluny Crucifixion may have existed in service books. From the Gellone Sacramentary onwards, the initial 'T' of *Te igitur* opening the canon of the Mass was commonly shown in continental MSS as the Crucifixion or the Cross, frequently a *tau*, foliated as the Tree of Life. This tradition was certainly combined with the motif of the lopped tree-trunk Cross in at

23 Literature cited by R. E. Kaske, 'A Poem on the Cross in the Exeter Book: "Riddle 60" and "The Husband's Message"', *Traditio* XXIII, 1967, pp. 47–66 and n. 65, fig. 4. Examples of hewn timber cross: ninth-century ivory on cover of Henry II's Book of Pericopes, tenth-century Corvey sacramentary, mid-eleventh-century Rhineland altar in G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, II, London 1972, pls. 365, 383, 554.

24 New York, Pierpont Morgan Lib. 709, fol. iv, *A–S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 93, pl. 299; P. Needham, *Twelve Centuries of Bookbindings, 400–1600*, New York & London 1979, p. 38, nn. 1, 2.

25 New York, Pierpont Morgan Lib., MS 333 fol. 85, Swarzenski, op. cit. n. 18, pl. 161.

least one Anglo-Saxon missal from Winchester, c. 1061.²⁶ Others may also have incorporated the image of the dead Christ featured in tenth- and eleventh-century continental sacramentaries and missals. Few early illustrated English service books have survived, but the extensive narrative series [38] illustrating liturgical feasts in the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges c. 1020, although depicting the crucified Christ awake, shows his head and body bowed and ribs delineated, as on the Cluny altar Christ; the two figures share the detail of heart-shaped lines denoting the elbow joints.²⁷ Further support for the suggested service book origins of the Cluny Crucifixion scene is found in the Christological miniatures of the Tiberius Psalter which Francis Wormald thought represented a liturgical cycle, possibly based on sacramentary illustrations.²⁸ Perhaps because, uniquely among Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion drawings, fol. 13 shows Christ flanked by Stephaton and Longinus (who also differ stylistically from the lateral figures on the Cluny altar), the Tiberius Psalter illustration has never been considered as an iconographic parallel. However, this Winchester MS of c. 1050 or later does feature a hewn tree-trunk *tau* Cross with a *suppedeneum* and omits the sun, moon and *dextra Domini*, while its more extended figure of the dead Christ shares with that on the Cluny altar broad similarities of pose and several striking details. The haloes in both works have beaded rims, the *perizonium* is knotted, unusually, on Christ's right side, there is a faint pattern of dots at his breast and three strands of hair fall on his left shoulder. In both works the heart-shaped line decorates Christ's elbow joints, as it does in B.L. Arundel 60 fol. 12v, c. 1060, which also shows the dead Christ on a hewn timber Cross. In short, the Crucifixion programme on the Cluny altar shares some essential features with that in MSS of Winchester connections, c. 1050–64. But the image of the dead Christ on a lopped *tau* Cross could have been formulated in Anglo-Saxon art earlier than its extant examples; like the Crucifixion in the Tiberius Psalter, the Cluny altar Crucifixion could have been derived from the *Te igitur* illustration in a now lost sacramentary.²⁹

26 'The Red Book of Darley', Cambridge C.C.C. MS 422, p. 53; E. Parker McLachlan, 'The Bury Missal in Laon and its Crucifixion Miniature', *Gesta* XVII, 1978, fig. 3 and pp. 28–30 for the tradition of *Te igitur* illustration.

27 Rouen, Bibl. municipale MS Y. 6, fol. 71v, H.A. Wilson ed., *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, Henry Bradshaw Society, London 1896, pl. VI. The double curve which sketches the elbow muscle in the Crucifixion of BL Harley 2904, fol. 3v (last quarter of tenth century, Winchester), hardens in the Sherborne Pontifical, Paris B.N. lat. 943, fol. 4v (?Canterbury), in the St Bertin Gospels, Cambridge C.C.C. 421, p. 1 and on the Cluny altar where it appears well below the joint of the right arm. In the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges, the Tiberius Psalter and the Arundel Psalter Crucifixion scenes, it appears with an additional hard central line. The motif is absent from other late Anglo-Saxon Crucifixions (Judith of Flanders's Gospels, Titus D. XXVII), but continues beyond the Conquest. F. Wormald, *English Drawing of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, London 1952, p. 51.

28 F. Wormald, 'An English Eleventh Century Psalter with Pictures', *Walpole Society*, XXXVIII, 1962, p. 6, pl. 14.

29 Arundel 60, fol. 12v, c. 1060 combines the iconography of the dead Christ on a timber Cross with a formalised version of the style of Titus D.XXVII, c. 1023–35 whose Calendar it closely recalls. *A–S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 103, pl. 312. The stylistic similarities between this MS and the Cluny

The *Agnus Dei*

In the lower mount of the altar directly below the Crucifixion is a roundel with a pelleted rim, draped with a liturgical curtain. It contains the *Agnus Dei* standing with one foreleg raised in front of a small equal-armed cross with a slender shaft. It accords with the second grouping (c. 950–1050) of M. Dolley's outline of the Insular iconography of the *Agnus Dei* in which he associates the Sulgrave nummular brooch and the abortive '*Agnus Dei*' coinage of Aethelred II with contemporary liturgical developments amounting to a new 'early eleventh century vogue of the *Agnus Dei*'. He notes that the most obvious criterion of the iconographic type is 'the tablet beneath the Lamb which is in the shape of a parallelogram' inscribed A:G or AG:N or A 'W' and asserts 'What does seem clear is that [39] we are dealing beyond all reasonable doubt with the imagery of John 1. 29 and not with that of Revelation 5.6'.³⁰ The Cluny altar example may suggest some qualifications. The Lamb here appears in the apocalyptic company of the four Beasts. The eagle, lion and ox each stands with a foreleg raised in the exact gesture of the Lamb, their giant gospel books are similarly positioned and precisely like the 'parallelogram' beneath the *Agnus Dei*: this is the Book of Life whose seals the Lamb alone was found worthy to break in the vision of Christ's majesty in Revelation 5.³¹

Continental examples illustrate even more clearly the possible existence in one work of allusions to John 1:29 (and hence to the eucharistic chant of the *Agnus Dei*) and to the apocalyptic Lamb. In a Cologne MS of c. 1000 the Lamb is wreathed victoriously and stands on the Book of Life, though placed at the opening of St John's Gospel and labelled *Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata*; similarly, the reverse of the cross of the Holy Roman Empire, c. 1030, portrays the Lamb in an apocalyptic context standing on the Book of Life and surrounded by the four Beasts, yet within a roundel inscribed *Ecce Agnus Dei*.³² Other eleventh-century crosses, in metal and ivory, feature the *Agnus Dei* and the four Beasts, which were common on Anglo-Saxon stone crosses.³³ Allusions to the Crucifixion, the Eucharist and the Second Coming had already been richly combined in Carolingian

altar have already been noted. The angular pose, rib-cage and perizonium of the Cluny Christ recur in the stylised. Crucifixion with Evangelist symbols added c. 1080 to Arundel 60 (fol. 52v), C.M. Kauffman, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066–1190*, London 1975, cat. 1. pl. 2.

30 'The nummular brooch from Sulgrave', in P. Clemoes and K. Hughes, eds, *England Before the Conquest*, Cambridge 1972, pp. 338, 343.

31 *Alpha* and *omega*, referring to Revelation 1:17 and 22:13, are sometimes inscribed on the Book of Life in Apocalypse illustrations; they appear on the 'tablet' beneath the Lamb in the Hereford coin discussed by M. Dolley.

32 Giessen Univbl. Cod. 660, fol. 190r, P. Bloch and H. Schnitzler, *Die Ottonische Kölner Malerschule*, Dusseldorf 1967, pl. 199; Swarzenski, op. cit. n. 18, figs 76–79.

33 M. Park, 'The Crucifix of Fernando and Sancha and its Relationship with North French Manuscripts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXVI, 1973, p. 78, n. 4, pl. 7; R. Cramp, 'The Evangelist Symbols and their Parallels in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture', *British Archaeological Reports*, XLVI, 1978, pp. 118–30.

representations of the *Majestas Agni*.³⁴ The *Agnus Dei* appears on portable altars, either standing on the Book of Life or raised in a clypeus by angels and accompanied by the four Beasts or typological scenes of sacrifice.³⁵ The portable altar of St Faith, Conques c. 1000, has corner medallions of the Beasts on the marginal mounts, and the medallion of the *Agnus Dei*, shown against the Cross, is placed in precisely the position occupied by the Lamb on the Cluny altar.³⁶

The Cluny design, in showing the sacrificial *Agnus Dei* in an apocalyptic setting on the eucharistic altar, thus reflects a common theological preoccupation of early medieval art. It is ultimately derived from standard exegetical and *lectio divina* practice of constant scriptural cross-reference allowing multiple allusion and the application of texts concerning Christ to the continuing sacramental life of his body, the Church. Jerome succinctly and influentially observed that the *Agnus Dei* acclaimed by John the Baptist in the gospel (John 1:29) is the Paschal Lamb of Christ's sacrifice, prefigured in the slain lamb of the Exodus Passover, foretold by Isaiah and Jeremiah in their Messianic image of the lamb sent to the slaughter which was given Christological interpretation by the apostle Philip [40] (Acts 8:32–35) and finally revealed in glory as the apocalyptic Lamb.³⁷ While the context (and audience) of any medieval representation of the *Agnus Dei* might emphasise one allusion in particular, like the image of the *lignum vitae*, its associations could scarcely be confined to one text. However, it was not usual in early liturgical art to combine the *Agnus Dei* and the Crucifixion (rather than the Cross or emblems of the Passion) in one composition and the few examples depict a decidedly living and exalted Christ.³⁸ The Cluny altar explicitly pairs the glorified eucharistic Lamb with the dead body of the Crucified, which suggests an interest in the *corpus verum* generally associated with late eleventh- and twelfth-century theology.

The four Beasts

Besides symbolising the four evangelists in gospel miniatures, the four Beasts were placed at the cardinal points or the four corners of a rectangular composition in MSS or on liturgical objects to accompany a central scene of the *Majestas*

34 Bamberg, Staatsbibl., Misc. class. Bibl. 1, fol. 339v shows the *Agnus Dei* standing on the Book of Life and surrounded by instruments of the Passion, the eucharistic chalice and the apocalyptic Beasts, H.L. Kessler, *The Illustrated Bibles from Tours*, Princeton 1977, pl. 47; also pp. 42–53; pls. 64–68.

35 E.g. Arnulf's ciborium (Swarzenski, op. cit. n. 18, fig. 14); altar of Svanhild, c. 1050–75, Melk and altar in Osnabruck, Domschatz, c. 1080 (A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen*, II, Berlin 1918, pls. XXXIII, XXXI).

36 Lasko, op. cit. n. 17, pl. 261. Schiller notes that patens inscribed with the Lamb may have existed in the eleventh century, though surviving examples date from after 1100, *Iconography*, n. 23, II, p. 121.

37 In *Esaïam*, xiv, liii, *Corpus Christianorum S.L.*, LXXIII A, Turnhout 1963, pp. 591–92.

38 The tenth-century ivory Nicaius Diptych, Goldschmidt, op. cit. n. 35, I, pl. LXXI; the Uota Codex, Munich, Staatsbibl. clm. 13601, fols. 3v–4r, J. Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art*, London 1964, pl. 97.

Domini or the *Agnus Dei* or, less often, the Crucifixion. While it is obviously difficult to know which aspects of a rich exegetical tradition any particular representation of the Beasts may consciously have carried, it is also useful to recall how familiar the chief features of that tradition were through the liturgy and homilies,³⁹ through the text *Plures fuisse*, often included among the prefatory matter of gospel books, and through the popular verses of Sedulius inscribed on some evangelist portraits.⁴⁰ Pictorially, the Beasts derived from two major Mediterranean types: either full-length without any attributes (as in early Insular art of the Columban tradition and extant very rarely elsewhere) or winged, haloed half-figures holding scrolls or books. Ernst Kitzinger showed that the earliest extant combination of the two iconographic types occurs on the lid of St Cuthbert's coffin reliquary, and the representation of the Beasts as full-length figures with attributes then became a common alternative to the half-length or portrait-bust type.⁴¹ However, even as early as the Lindisfarne Gospels such designs usually distinguished St Matthew's symbol of the man by representing him alone among the four Beasts as a half-length figure. Representations of the man as a full-length, winged, haloed figure, standing (not flying) and holding a book were uncommon before the twelfth century. In addition to the Cluny altar, exceptions include the Grimbald Gospels, c. 1020, and Pierpont Morgan Library MS 708, from the collection of Judith of Flanders.⁴² A possibly related Anglo-Saxon gospel book, c. 1062, shares with the altar a further peculiarity in the iconography of the evangelist symbols: the ox and lion are nimbed but without wings.⁴³ Late Anglo-Saxon representations of the evangelist symbols are often experimental, adapting early Insular and Carolingian [41] features, but for the Cluny altar's mixture of types (i.e. showing all four Beasts standing full-length with haloes and books, two winged and two wingless), no exact parallels readily come to mind.⁴⁴

The closest precedents for the combination occur in Carolingian canon tables,⁴⁵ and Apocalypse illustrations, presumably reflecting lost pictorial types of the Beasts earlier than those on St Cuthbert's coffin, contain separate examples of

39 Gregory's homilies on Ezekiel, *PL.*, LXXXVI, 785, 815–16 extended and popularised the exegesis of Ireneus and Jerome and were incorporated in the liturgy for the Evangelists; the tradition is summarised by M. Vloberg, *L'euchariste dans l'art*, Paris 1946, pp. 223–28.

40 Arenberg Gospels, c. 990–1000, *A-S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 56, pls. 169–70; Kessler, n. 34, pp. 40–41.

41 E. Kitzinger, 'The Coffin Reliquary' in C.F. Battiscombe, ed., *Relics of St Cuthbert*, pp. 202–304; R. Bruce-Mitford in *Codex Lindisfarnensis*, II, Lausanne 1960, pp. 158–61, pls. 25, 27.

42 *A-S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 68, 94, pls. 215, 286. Judith's other Gospels (cat. 3, 95) show greater curiosities in the iconography of the Beasts.

43 Rheims, Bibl. municipale MS 9, col. 88, *A-S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 105, pl. 299 and cat. 66, pl. 217 for wingless ox without halo in BL Arundel 155, fol. 53.

44 The Hunt reliquary cross shows all the symbols full-length, the ox and lion wingless, but without haloes or books, J. Beckwith, *Ivory Carvings in Medieval England*, London 1972, cat. 108, late twelfth century; but see Lasko, n. 17, p. 167 for late eleventh-century date.

45 Würzburg Univ. Lib. MS, M.p. theol. fol. 66, fol. 3r, E. Rosenbaum, 'The Vine Column of Old St Peter's', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVIII, 1955, pls. 2a, e, 3c, d.

the symbol of St Matthew winged yet full-length and of the ox and lion haloed yet wingless.⁴⁶ Carolingian manuscripts also provide parallels for showing the Beasts not as static symbols encapsulated in medallions, but as full-length figures engaged in a dumb-show, flanking and apparently commenting on a central image. St Matthew's symbol, paired with the Lion in flanking the Lamb, is, despite the awkwardly restrictive space of the Cluny altar mounts, shown full-length and winged, holding a book and extending his hand in a gesture of speech; the scene of the angel introducing with a loud voice the whole tableau of the Lion of Judah and the Lamb in Revelation 5:2 is thought to have been illustrated in some Carolingian manuscripts.⁴⁷ Touronian Apocalypse illustrations were influenced by early exegesis, particularly that of Victorinus who had associated the lion of the evangelist with the Messianic Lion of Judah. These two lions are shown as identical except that the evangelist's beast has wings; the wingless haloed Lion of Judah standing in profile with right forepaw raised facing inwards to the Lamb and roaring as the seal of the Book of Life is broken, offers some broad comparison with the stance of the lion on the Cluny altar and a possible clue to the unusual grouping of the figures on its lower mount.

But although there is indirect evidence that in some Carolingian Apocalypse illustrations the Lion of Judah may also have had the Cluny lion's type of mane and tail,⁴⁸ extant examples do not. Beasts with variants of the tail clamped between the legs occur in early Insular art and in Carolingian and Ottonian Majestas scenes and are commonplace in Romanesque sculpture, but the specific type of the Cluny lion's tail (which snakes out from under the belly to terminate in a large plume pointing forwards over the back) and its combination with the mane of tufted curls, was particularly popular in eleventh-century England.⁴⁹ Twice the clamped tail appears in ivory pectoral crosses showing winged evangelist symbols with

46 Gospels of St Médard of Soissons, fol. 1v, Moutier-Grandval Bible, fol. 449r, Vivian Bible, fol. 415v, Bible of San Paolo, fol. 331v; Kessler, n. 34, pls. 107–09, pp. 69–83. The Evangelist portraits in the Godescalc Evangelistary also show the ox and lion wingless with beaded haloes. Amiens, Bibl. mun. 225, fol. 69 (of unknown origin but probably from very early sources) a haloed wingless lion with a book, J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular MSS*, London 1978, p. 15, fig. 20.

47 Kessler, n. 34, p. 69, fig. 110; Gospels of St Médard, fol. 11r shows the angel and lion alone in 'dumb-show', H. Holländer, *Early Medieval Art*, London 1974, pl. 45.

48 See copy of *Liber floridus* Apocalypse scene in Herzog August. Bibl., Cod. Guelf. Gud. lat. 2, fol. 14v, F. van der Meer, *Apocalypse. Visions from the Book of Revelation in W. Art*, London 1978, pl. 87. Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, n. 17, pl. 89, for Lion of Judah on portable reliquary-altar of St Andrew, 977–93.

49 Several early Insular examples show the tail clamped between the legs with the foliate, fringed or forked tip just swinging below or alongside the belly, but the combination of the specific 'Cluny' type of tail and the stylised mane was possibly known in pre-Carolingian art, e.g. Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, M.17.4, fol. 10v, which 'must reflect an Anglo-Saxon copy deriving directly or indirectly' from the copy of the *Carmen Paschale* presumed to have been brought from Rome by Bishop Cuthwine: Alexander, op. cit. n. 46, cat. 65, pl. 290. A separate note is in preparation.

books surrounding the *Agnus Dei* with cross and book.⁵⁰ But [42] closer parallels occur in settings very different from that on the Cluny altar. A lion in the Caedmon Genesis c. 1000 adopts the pose of the Cluny lion, the same type of tail, and a sparse stylised mane which is quite different from the naturalistic shagginess of Carolingian lions and recalls instead early Insular examples.⁵¹ Though differently posed, the wrestling lion in the Bury Psalter bears an even closer family resemblance to the drawing of the Cluny lion and the mane similarly consists of *two* tiers of hatched curls.⁵² Parallels appear in confronted pairs of wingless lions in decorative contexts in various media: above a gospel *incipit* in a book belonging to Judith of Flanders,⁵³ in the foliage scrolls of the St Bertin Gospel borders and on the British Museum ivory pen case.⁵⁴ Many beasts in the borders of the Bayeux Tapestry sport this distinctive 'Cluny' tail, and often the tufted mane or even the two-tiered tufted mane. Several such beasts, including lions, are here shown in profile with the far forepaw raised jaws open and the muzzle marked with a line, as on the Cluny altar lion. A number of these examples share Canterbury-St Bertin associations and an interest in the antique or the exotic. Eastern textiles seem a highly probable source of inspiration, and the close correspondence between the Cluny lion and lions in two early twelfth-century English manuscripts indicates that astrological works and the *Physiologus* could also have transmitted the type.⁵⁵

While the Cluny altar's mixture of iconographic types of the four Beasts is unusual, their order is extraordinary. After early permutations the most common way was to show the symbol of the man to the left of the eagle at the top, and the lion to the left of the ox at the bottom of a rectangular composition. This arrangement could be reversed horizontally, but if read clockwise, the Beasts would still appear in the presumed chronological order of the evangelists they symbolised: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Cluny altar however, pairs the symbols of Matthew and Mark below those of Luke and John. This represents a straight inversion of an arrangement commonly found in early Insular examples such as St Cuthbert's coffin lid, the Lichfield Gospels and the Book of Kells.⁵⁶

Interpretations of the vision of Ezekiel, which underlies the Beasts' appearance in Revelation 4:6–8, determined the order in which commentators assigned the

50 Beckwith, *op. cit.* n. 44, cat. 27, 45.

51 *A-S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 58, pl. 190.

52 Vatican, Bibl. Apostolica MS Reg. lat. 12, fol. 66v, Swarzenski, *op. cit.* n. 18, pl. 134.

53 Monte Cassino Archivio della Badia, BB 439, p. 127; *A-S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 95, pl. 288.

54 Pierpont Morgan Lib., MS 333, fol. 51, J.J.G. Alexander, *The Decorated Letter*, London 1978, pl. 21; Beckwith, *op. cit.* n. 44, cat. 46, pls. 95–97.

55 L. Thorpe, *The Bayeux Tapestry and the Norman Invasion*, London 1973, esp. pls. 39–40, 68, 71–72. Dodwell, *op. cit.* n. 3, p. 169, pl. 42. Oxford, Bod. 614, fol. 19v and Laud Misc. 247, fol. 139v, Kauffmann, *op. cit.* n. 29, cat. 38, 36, pl. 107, fig. 43.

56 Alexander, *op. cit.* n. 46, fig. 5, pls. 81, 231, 246; also pl. 230 for the Book of Armagh fol. 32v, pl. 114 for Trier, Domschatz Cod., 61, fol. 1v, pls. 304–05 for Valenciennes, Bibl. mun. 99, fols 10, 12, an early ninth-century Apocalypse probably modelled on an Insular book. The arrangement also occurs in the Gundohinus Gospels c. 751–54, Autun, Bibl. mun. MS lat. 3, fol. 12v and in the problematic gospel book from Augsburg, Bayer. Staatsbibl., clm. 23631, fol. 197r.

Beasts to the four gospel writers. However, in exegesis the Beasts denote not simply the four evangelists but also the attributes and mysteries of Christ himself: the man, the ox, the lion and the eagle symbolise respectively the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension.⁵⁷ The image of the Crucifixion accompanied by the four Beasts could therefore set the Cross [43] in the context of an unfolding theophany by recalling the Christological mysteries; Ottonian representations of the Crucifixion and four evangelist symbols were occasionally accompanied by scenes of these four mysteries.⁵⁸ The familiar image of the four Beasts surrounding Christ enthroned was also set amidst scenes of the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension on some altars, thereby identifying the incarnate Christ revealed through the gospel accounts of the mysteries of redemption, with the same Christ whose full divinity is manifested in the apocalyptic vision of his majesty. In the context of an altar, the whole redemptive process from the Annunciation to the Second Coming, and continuing through the sacrament, could thus be presented as a unity.⁵⁹ On its own modest scale, the Cluny altar deals with some of these great theological themes. The Cluny design telescopes the image of the Crucifixion amid the evangelist symbols and the image of Majesty amid the apocalyptic Beasts. The realignment of the familiar images makes a fresh statement of the standard early medieval interpretation of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. The role of the four figures in the side mounts of the altar helps to clarify the programme and to suggest that the unusual ordering of the four Beasts is not simply the arbitrary alteration of a pictorial cliché.

The Virgin and St John

In his commentary on St Luke's account of the Annunciation, Bede quoted the ancient belief, familiar throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, that the Crucifixion had actually occurred on the anniversary of the Annunciation.⁶⁰ The two scenes

57 These scenes accompany the appropriate Beasts and Evangelist portraits or Gospel openings in some Ottonian MSS: Munich, Bayer. Staatsbibl. Cod. lat. 4454, Hildesheim Domschatz, MS 18, see Konrad Hoffmann, 'Die Evangelistenbilder des Munchener Otto-Evangeliars', *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, xx, Berlin 1966, figs. 2, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17.

58 Abbess Theophanu's bookcover (Essen), and ivory panel (Brussels, Musées Royaux), c. 1050, Lasko, n. 17, pls. 141, 173, pl. 132 for cover of Aachen Gospels c. 1020, with the four Beasts and Christological scenes. E.C. Parker, 'The Missing Plaque of the Bury St Edmunds Cross', *Gesta*, XIV, 1975, pp. 22, 26.

59 E.g. the Carolingian *paliotto* of San Ambrogio, Milan, Lasko, op. cit. n. 17, pls. 46–47; group of late eleventh-century German portable ivory altars, Goldschmidt, op. cit. n. 35, II, pls. XXXI–XXXV; portable altar of Eilbertus c. 1130/40, Swarzenski, op. cit. n. 18, pl. 106. Braun, op. cit. n. 3, I, pp. 503–04.

60 In *Lucam*, I, 26. É. Ó Carragáin, 'Crucifixion as Annunciation: the Relation of *The Dream of the Rood* to the Liturgy Reconsidered', *English Studies*, LXIII, 1982, pp. 494–97. The Annunciation and Crucifixion are juxtaposed on the Ruthwell Cross and the Harrach ivory diptych; the Utrecht Psalter fol. 85v shows the Annunciation and Nativity next to the Flagellation and Crucifixion; the Ottonian ivories cited in n. 58 show the Incarnation at the foot of the Cross.

were directly juxtaposed in a number of early medieval works, and the underlying idea could also be conveyed by showing the power of the Cross implicit in the Annunciation or by suggesting the sacrificial implications of the Incarnation. The engraver of the Cluny altar's inscription apparently saw no incongruity in identifying the angel in the left-hand mount, shown beneath Mary at the Crucifixion, with Gabriel, angel of the Annunciation.

Above and below the Virgin and Gabriel are the two evangelist symbols who in exegesis denote the Incarnation and the Passion. St Luke was assigned the ox as his symbol and associated with Christ's priestly attributes because a Jewish priestly sacrifice forms the symbolic prologue to the Annunciation which Luke alone records. The New Testament contrast of the ox as sacrificial beast of the Old Law and of the crucified Christ as the New Covenant High-Priestly sacrifice, was to be combined specifically with St Luke's ox, betokening Christ's Passion, at the opening of Luke's Gospel in twelfth-century manuscripts.⁶¹ But more simply, and iconographically closer to the Cluny altar design, the essential idea occurs in a Bamberg gospel book c. 1020 which shows the [44] evangelists' symbols paired with the four Christological mysteries they represent: St Luke's ox is here shown directly facing Christ in the form of the dying Lamb before the Cross.⁶² The very similar juxtaposition of the sacrificial ox and the Cross on the Cluny altar may explain the unusual positioning of St Luke's Beast in the total scheme.

As the presence of the Virgin beneath the Cross helps link the mysteries of the Incarnation and Passion symbolised by the two Beasts on the left side of the altar, so the mysteries of the Resurrection and Ascension associated with the lion and the eagle on the right, are linked by the figure of St John. The pairing of the Virgin and John beneath the Cross, which unites the two side mounts of the altar, recalls the customary Crucifixion tableau. This derives its sole scriptural authority from St John's account of Christ from the Cross entrusting his mother to his beloved disciple. John's account of the Passion was the version read during the liturgical commemoration of the Crucifixion. In the side mount of the Cluny altar John holds up his gospel book and testifies to its truth by witnessing the Crucifixion above. He also witnessed the Resurrection, and his own symbolic Beast directly refers to the Ascension. Furthermore, he was believed to have been the author of the Book of Revelation, where the unfolding theophany is completed: the divine nature of the redeeming Lamb acclaimed at the opening of John's Gospel, 1.29, is fully revealed in John's vision of the apocalyptic Lamb in glory (and here shown in the lower mount).

In considering the Cluny altar design and the inscription placed next to St John (*discipulus plorat Raphael quem semp adorat*), the Bury St Edmunds crucifix is of

61 Averbode Gospels, Liège Bibl. de l'Univ. MS 363 c, and Floreffe Bible, BL Add. MS 17738, fol. 187, c. 1139, G. Chapman, 'The Bible of Floreffe. Re-dating of a Romanesque MS', *Gesta*, x, 1971, p. 60, fig. 6.

62 Munich, Bayer. Staatsbibl., clm 4454, fol. 127v. See n. 57, fig. 11.

interest. Christ similarly hangs from a hewn timber Cross whose terminal points bear scenes of the Christological mysteries; in a corresponding position relative to the viewer, the Beasts of the evangelists are shown on the reverse around a central boss of the *Agnus Dei*. St John stands to the left of the pierced Lamb as if at the Crucifixion, and is comforted with a text from Revelation 5:5 ('Weep no more') by an angel who shows him the redeeming and divine nature of the same Lamb.⁶³

Despite a number of unusual iconographic features, the total design of the Cluny altar depends upon the fusion of two extremely familiar themes and images. Read as accompanying the Crucifixion scene, the Beasts can allude to the evangelists and the attributes and mysteries of Christ described in their gospels; in adoring the Lamb, the Beasts refer to the eschatological vision of Christ's majesty. Seen as doing both simultaneously, they stress the identification of the Crucified and the glorified Lamb. The somewhat enigmatic inscription and the lateral figures it describes offer a further clue to the relationship of the components of the programme. An attempt will here be made, not to spot specific 'sources', but to illustrate contemporary devotional interests which can assist our understanding of the associations the Cluny figures might have suggested for contemporaries.

Adoratio Crucis

The inscription (Figure 12.1) can be read as describing the mother and disciple mourning (him) whom Gabriel and Raphael cleave to and always adore. The grief of St John and especially the Virgin, which is not featured in the gospel account, was movingly shown in [45] Anglo-Saxon art long before St Anselm's affective meditation on Mary weeping at the foot of the Cross.⁶⁴ However, anguish is not the dominant note of the figures in the side mounts of the Cluny altar. In witnessing the historical moment of the Crucifixion, Christ's mother and closest disciple mourn his death, but here on the altar their position, gesture and scale join them with the two archangels whose vision of the Crucifixion was shared by the Church on earth in its reverence for the dead timbers of the Cross as the Tree of Life.

The importance of the devotion to the Cross in early medieval spirituality is widely evident in the liturgical commemorations of the Passion and of the Cross and the feasts of its Invention and Exaltation, in the large body of Holy Cross hymns and prayers, in vernacular literature (most obviously *The Dream of the Rood*), in the proliferation of relics, dedication of altars and the development of monumental crucifixes and roods during the later tenth and early eleventh

63 *Ars Sacra*, n. 17, pls. 177–78, pp. 167–68 where Lasko argues on stylistic grounds for an early date, c. 1100/30; B. Raw, 'The Archer, the Eagle and the Lamb', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxx, 1967, pp. 391–92.

64 B.L. Harley 2904, fol. 3v, last quarter of tenth century; Judith of Flanders's Gospels, fol. 1v: *A-S MSS*, n. 12, pls. 142, 289; *Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, fol. 71v, HBS, pl. VI. See Anselm's *Prayer to Christ*, esp. lines 89–108; B. Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, Harmondsworth 1973, pp. 95–96.

centuries.⁶⁵ The theme of the Good Friday Adoratio Crucis ceremony in particular, which is representatively described in the English monastic customary the *Regularis Concordia*, helps illumine the paradox of mourning and adoration posed by the Cluny altar lateral inscriptions. The ceremony commemorates the pain but chiefly celebrates the glory of the Cross. After St John's triumphant account of the Crucifixion, and the *Improperia* lamenting Christ's sorrows and lauding the Godhead with the triple eastern Sanctus, two deacons raised the unveiled Cross before the altar for veneration by the entire monastic community. During the Adoration, the two deacons sang the *Crux fidelis* and antiphons which help explain why, on the Cluny altar, the two archangels gazing up at the Cross do not mourn but worship: *Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit* and *Crucem tuam adoramus; ecce enim propter venit gaudium in universo mundo*.⁶⁶

It was a patristic commonplace that this redeeming Cross renewed creation and united heaven and earth; men and angels are, accordingly, joined in adoring the glorified Cross as the paradisaical *lignum vitae* at each end of the golden altar of San Ambrogio.⁶⁷ A Carolingian liturgical comb depicting the Crucifixion adapts features of the Veneration of the Cross shown on early ampullae. Stephaton and Longinus genuflect, Mary and John raise their hands in witness and acclamation. Above the *lignum vitae*, and on a larger scale, two angels stoop in obeisance.⁶⁸ Angels, sometimes the archangels Michael and Gabriel, were shown acclaiming the exalted Cross/Tree of Life on early Byzantine eucharistic vessels, reflecting the identification of the Divine Liturgy itself with the Passion.⁶⁹ The liturgical Adoratio Crucis may be reflected in the late Anglo-Saxon ivory from North Elmham, usually described as a Last Judgement.⁷⁰ Two angels exalt the Cross above a [46] group of figures as, in the Good Friday ceremony, two deacons raise the Cross for veneration by the Church on earth. Above, the wounded Christ is revealed in glory, and acclaimed by the Virgin and St Peter, representatives of his redeemed Church.

A devotional theme recurring on tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantine portable altars and book covers (and later influencing western reliquaries of the True Cross), depicts half-figures of Michael and Gabriel above the Cross who join Mary and John not in mourning the dead Christ, but in proclaiming the divinity of

65 For literature and examples see 'De Laudibus Sanctae Crucis' in G. Henderson, *Early Medieval*, Harmondsworth 1972, pp. 201–38; J. Szoverffy, *Hymns of the Holy Cross*, Leiden 1976 (annotated texts); Raw, op. cit. n. 3, pp. 239–53, esp. 250–51 for the cult in eleventh-century England.

66 *Regularis Concordia*, ed. T. Symons, London 1953, pp. 41–45.

67 J. Hubert, J. Porcher, W.F. Volbach, *Carolingian Art*, London 1970, pls. 223–24; for patristic references see Kaske, op. cit. n. 23, pp. 47–48. Late Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion drawings commonly show the cosmological Cross joining stylised representations of heaven and earth: Sherborne Pontifical, Arenberg Gospels, Judith of Flanders's Gospels, the psalter Arundel 60 (*A-S MSS*, n. 12, pls. 134, 1–1, 289, 312).

68 Kölnisches Stadtmuseum: Goldschmidt, op. cit. n. 35, I, pl. XXXIX.

69 V.H. Elbern, 'Altar implements and liturgical objects' in K. Weitzmann, ed., *The Age of Spirituality, Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, New York 1979, cat. 482, 545, pp. 537–38, 593–610.

70 Beckwith, op. cit. n. 44, cat. 18.

the Redeemer.⁷¹ Few early western examples combine angels adoring Christ with Mary and John mourning him, as in the inscription of the Cluny altar, though the combination does occur in mid-thirteenth-century English Psalter scenes of the dead Christ on the hewn timber cross.⁷² Usually, early works which emotively emphasise the tender, personal grief of Christ's mother and beloved disciple omit the angels, as in the Anglo-Saxon Harley Psalter 2904 and Judith of Flanders's gospel book.⁷³ Angels share the grief of Mary and John in later scenes of the Crucifixion but in early medieval representations they generally stress its sacramental character. The Sherborne Pontifical and the Arenberg Gospels, for example, show the chalice beneath the Cross to receive Christ's redeeming blood, and Mary and John are presented chiefly in their role as representatives of the faithful redeemed. In a gesture of acclamation, not despair, they are paired with the two angels above who adore the Crucified with veiled hands as though participating in a rite.⁷⁴

The Cluny altar design can be recognised as an original variation on this common liturgical theme, even though the angels here are positioned below rather than above the foot of the Cross. Although Christ's mother and disciple are not frontal hieratic figures but turn expressively and gaze up at the Crucified, their solemn gestures are those of acclamation and prayer rather than of extreme grief; they do not provide a literal rendering of the inscription's reference to their human mourning, but show its transformation. The angels' similar gaze upwards to the Crucifixion, combined with their positioning low down on the altar near the Lamb, helps unite a potentially awkward composition of various scales and several types of representation. The eucharistic and eschatological *Agnus Dei* shown below the angels in the lower mount provides a gloss on the true nature of the object of their adoration in the upper mount, and explains why they do not mourn the dead Christ. Further, the positioning of the angels on the Cluny altar combines allusions to the Adoratio Crucis with the related theme of the Heavenly Liturgy.

The Heavenly Liturgy

Eleventh-century monumental representations of the archangels place them on or immediately near the altar;⁷⁵ in some missal illustrations angels bear eucha-

71 Schiller, *Iconography*, n. 23, II, pls. 338–40. Pierpont Morgan Library, *The Stavelot Triptych*, New York 1980, pls. 7, 22, 51.

72 E.g. Carolingian Lindau Gospels cover, Swarzenski, op. cit. n. 18, figs. 22–25. Late examples in M. Rickert, *Painting in Britain in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn, Harmondsworth 1965, pls. 106–07.

73 *A-S MSS*, n. 12, pls. 142, 289. See Swarzenski, figs. 26–28 for Carolingian precedents and fig. 543, Missal of Anchin, fol. 98v, for twelfth-century example of angels sharing the grief of Mary and John which was not common before the thirteenth century: M. Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art*, New York 1976, pp. 96–98.

74 *A-S MSS*, n. 12, pls., 134, 171; the theme recurs on late Anglo-Saxon ivories, Beckwith, op. cit. n. 44, 17, 17a, 38.

75 Basle antependium, 1022/24?; Aachen antependium, c. 1020, Lasko, op. cit. n. 17, pls. 130, 131; frescoed crypt of St Andreas in Fulda-Nuremberg, c. 1023, M. Backes and R. Dölling, *Art*

ristic vessels [47] at the opening of the Preface or are shown at the altar beneath the *Majestas Domini*.⁷⁶ Angels and the apocalyptic Beasts are a frequent feature of portable altar decoration.⁷⁷ This reflects the belief that every Eucharist makes present the one sacrifice of the Lamb of God and participates in the Heavenly Liturgy where the same Lamb is perpetually adored by the angelic host. The deacon and subdeacon who serve Mass symbolically take the part of the angels who are held to be invisibly present. This mystical reality is given literal and ingenious expression on an ivory book cover c. 900–1000 where two angels in orans position are shown to be present at the eucharistic altar, though out of sight of the celebrant and deacons.⁷⁸ Engaged in this ceaseless celestial liturgy, Raphael stands at the edge of the porphyry slab of the Cluny altar in an orans position while Gabriel reverently holds a round object on veiled hand, like the two angels who join Mary and John in acclaiming Christ in an early eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon ivory of the Crucifixion.⁷⁹ The cross-inscribed object is probably derived from the orbs of Byzantine and Ottonian Archangels who attend Christ and denote his dominion, though here it appears as a disc with a beaded rim.⁸⁰ Braun thought it the Host, but the elevation was not common before the thirteenth century and the priest in the Heavenly Liturgy is Christ himself.⁸¹

The short sides of a portable altar were sometimes treated as the top and bottom of its design, as in the Cluny example, so that the altar closely resembles a precious metal book-cover. The figure of the *Majestas Domini* often occupied the central position on gospel books which were ‘enthroned’ on the altar; other liturgical contexts for the representation of Christ enthroned and adored by angels and the four Beasts were altars and sacramentary and missal illustrations of the

of the Middle Ages, New York 1969, p. 183; apsidal fresco in Sant’ Angelo in Formis, c. 1066, Vloberg, op. cit. n. 39, fig. 82; ambulatory reliefs in St Sernin, Toulouse, c. 1096, M. F. Hearn, *Romanesque Sculpture*, Oxford 1981, pls. 49–55.

76 Sacramentary of St Denis, fol. 15v (facing foliated tau cross Crucifixion on the *Te igitur* page), V. Leroquais, *Les Sacramentaires et les Missels Manuscrits*, Paris 1924, pl. xxx. E. Kirschbaum, ‘Himmlische Liturgie’, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, Rome 1968–76, III, cols. 103–06, fig. 2.

77 Either shown on the face (e.g. altar of Svanhild, c. 1050–75, altar at Osnabrück Domschatz, c. 1080, Goldschmidt, op. cit. n. 35, II, pls. XXXI, XXXIII) or on short upright ends of the altar (e.g. altar of Gertrude, c. 1030 shows the Adoration of the True Cross one end and five archangels the other, and the B.M. English ivory altar c. 1140–50 Mary and John mourning the dead Crucified with the *Majestas Domini*, Lasko, op. cit. n. 17, pls. 140, 276). Braun, op. cit. n. 3, I, pp. 503–04.

78 Frankfurt Staatsbibl., Lasko, op. cit. n. 17, pl. 105.

79 Beckwith, op. cit. n. 38, cat. 17.

80 While archangels hold cross-inscribed orbs, not discs, on works in relief, such as the Mortain casket and the Basle antependium (see n. 89), two-dimensional representations can be ambiguous, e.g. the Arenberg Gospels, fol. 10v.

81 Braun, op. cit. n. 3, I, p. 451. It is just possible the object additionally alludes to the paten carried by the subdeacon at Mass. J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Notre Dame 1956, pp. 130–31.

Sanctus and Canon.⁸² For contemporaries familiar with the sacramental identification of the altar with the divine throne, the porphyry slab of the Cluny altar bearing the consecrated host, and surrounded by adoring angels and the four Beasts in the marginal mounts, was Christ himself enthroned.

The text of the eucharistic liturgy enacted at the altar twice daily for a monastic community's Morrow Mass and Principal Mass, besides private Masses, can now be read as a highly allusive summary of themes on the Cluny altar which have so far been approached from other but closely related types of evidence, namely the decoration of liturgical objects and books. At the end of the Preface in the Mass, the Church on earth [48] joins its praise with the perpetual adoration of the heavenly host in the triple Sanctus (which directly echoes the hymn of the four Beasts and the seraphim around the divine throne in Revelation 4:8 and Isaiah 6:3). The Canon of the Mass then commemorates the Christological mysteries and anticipates the Second Coming. The celebrant actually prays that the present eucharistic sacrifice may be raised up to the heavenly altar, into the very presence of the Divine Majesty. Christ is then acclaimed in the consecrated bread on the altar with the public chant of the *Agnus Dei*.

Intercessors and angels

The *Agnus Dei* is not only an acclamation but a petition: *Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis*; by the eleventh century the third imprecation ended *dona nobis pacem*. The *Agnus Dei* prayer had an important place outside the Roman Canon in litanies of the saints. In the *Regularis Concordia*,⁸³ litanies formed twice daily additional devotions to the monastic Office and had repeated use in Holy Week, at Pentecost and during ministrations to the sick. Texts in a contemporary German sacramentary illustration which, like the Cluny altar, shows the dead Christ hanging from a hewn timber Cross, invoke the *Agnus Dei* formula and beseech the intercession of the attendant figures of Mary and John.⁸⁴ In the litanies which were included in early *libelli* of devotional materials taken from the monastic Office for private use, the Virgin and John were particularly invoked 'as the two at the foot of the Cross'.⁸⁵

It seems likely that they would also have been regarded as intercessors on the Cluny altar design. Together with the archangels in the side mounts, Mary and

82 The border of the *Majestas Domini* opening the Preface in the Carolingian sacramentary fragment from Metz, Paris B.N. lat. 1141, fol. 5r, imitates goldsmith's work. Halfway down the long sides, an inner border simulates red porphyry so that the scene of Christ adored by Beasts and angelic choir appears to be enthroned on a portable altar of the Adelhausen type: F. Mutherich and J.E. Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting*, London 1977, pl. 33. A miniature of the *Majestas* occupies the centre of some portable altars, Goldschmidt, op. cit. n. 35, 11, pl. XXXI (Osnabruck, c. 1080); Swarzenski, op. cit. n. 18, fig. 241 (altar of Eilbertus, 1130–40).

83 Ed. T. Symons, pp. 21, 26, 33, 38, 48, 57, 64, 68.

84 Leipzig Stadtbibl. Cod. exc. fol. 1v: A. Goldschmidt, *Die deutsche Buchmalerei*, I, Munich 1928, pl. 84a.

85 Ward, op. cit. n. 64, p. 40.

John occupy precisely the position of royal or ecclesiastical donors and their holy patrons represented on some Ottonian gospel covers.⁸⁶ It is impossible to say whether the *pro rege* and *et ora* read by Mitchell in the now deteriorated inscription on the top edge of the Cluny altar may have referred to intercession for the king, which was such a conspicuous feature of Anglo-Saxon monastic piety.⁸⁷

The names of the Holy Cross, Michael, Raphael and Mary head the series of invocations illustrated by a miniature added to the Athelstan Psalter in the tenth century. The image of Christ in Majesty expresses liturgical themes common to the Cluny altar design – the Cross is seen in the context of the Eucharist and the Heavenly Liturgy – but may also represent the intercession of the Choir of Angels who surround Christ's altar/throne. Led by Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, the angels formed the first of the hierarchical Heavenly Choirs on which litanies were framed. R. Deshman has suggested that this 'pictorial litany' revives 'an old, apparently indigenous Insular subject-matter' which may also have been featured extensively in the Benedictional of St Aethelwold.⁸⁸ [49]

The angels' intercessory role is evident on other liturgical objects. Michael and Gabriel flank Christ on the Anglo-Saxon Mortain casket which bears an inscription praying for the maker; they appear on the Carolingian altar of San Ambrogio as the immediate guardians of its artist and donor and, joined by Raphael, they appear with St Benedict attending Christ on the 'Golden Altar' of Basle c. 1022/24, as the protectors of its royal donor.⁸⁹ The use of two unidentified angelic beings to attend the Crucifixion, the *Agnus Dei* or the *Majestas Domini* was common, but the specific depiction of Gabriel and Raphael alone was not. The full reason for their appearance on the Cluny altar is now lost with the presumed exemplar of the inscription which alone explicitly identifies them. Gabriel, 'the fortitude of God' and angel of redemption and peace, has perhaps been reasonably accounted for, but the choice of Raphael (rather than the more popular Michael who was paired with Gabriel in the many Byzantine representations of two archangels) seems prob-

86 Codex aureus of Echternach, Gospel book of Abbess Theophanu: F. Steenback, *Der Kirchliche Prachteinband im Frühen Mittelalter*, Berlin 1965, cat. 42, 62. Thomas, op. cit. n. 16, pp. 192–94 for the early practice of inscribing portable altars with the names of holy patrons.

87 Mitchell, op. cit. n. 3, pp. 63–64. Prayers for the Royal House punctuate the *horarium* of the *Regularis Concordia*, pp. XLIII–XLIV, 14n. 3; *Missa Pro Rege* in 'Missal' of Robert of Jumièges, HBS, p. 249.

88 BL Cotton, Galba A. LXVIII, fol. 2v: *A–S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 5, pl. 32; R. Deshman, 'Anglo-Saxon Art after Alfred', *Art Bulletin*, LVI, 1974, p. 179; J.J.G. Alexander, 'The Benedictional of St Aethelwold and Anglo-Saxon Illumination of the Reform Period', D. Parsons, ed., *Tenth Century Studies*, London 1975, pp. 176, 243, n.39.

89 E. Okasha, *Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions*, Cambridge 1971, cat. 93; Hender-son, op. cit. n. 65, pl. 94; Lasko, op. cit. n. 17, pl. 130, p. 130 and pls. 132, 245 for the intercession of the Virgin and Michael with Christ on the Aachen altar frontal c. 1020 and the portable altar of S. Vitus c. 1160. The Rouen Psalter (Canterbury, late eleventh century) contains prayers for protection addressed to Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and the guardian angel, L. Gjerlow, *Adoratio Crucis*, Oslo 1961, pp. 134–36, 146.

lematic. However, Raphael was commonly identified with the angel who stands before the altar perpetually in the presence of God in St John's apocalyptic vision (Revelation 8:3) and with the angel of the healing waters of Bethesda (John 5:4). Raphael's role as powerful intercessor, patron of travellers, healer of the blind, and his very name 'the medicine of God' (all derived from his story in the Book of Tobias and recalled in the Offices for his feast), may further explain his inclusion on a portable altar which in all probability would also have served as a reliquary.

More precisely, such associations help explain why the engraver of the altar's inscription thought it appropriate to place Raphael's name alongside the angel standing beneath St John in the right-hand mount. The metrical lines, alluding to the devotional theme of Christ's mother and disciple mourning his death, as well as to the liturgical theme of the angels' perpetual adoration, have been applied to the Cluny altar's representation of the angels participating in the Heavenly Liturgy and joining Mary and John in the acclamation of the Cross. A certain ambiguity in the design itself might have prompted the association of text and image for, instead of showing the customary exalted Cross or a hieratic Christ, this *Adoratio Crucis* shows the dead Christ hanging from the dead timbers of the Cross. It illustrates the transitional character of the eleventh century in the history of spirituality, as in so much else. The design reflects a strongly liturgically derived devotional tradition which during the later tenth and eleventh centuries extended to the laity, especially to royal and noble ladies, and formed the context for the growth of a more affective piety, popularised through the writings and circle of St Anselm.

The Cluny altar inevitably remains problematic. It is a lone and undocumented survival made of luxury materials rare among late Anglo-Saxon works. It has unusual iconographic features. No parallel has been found combining both the figural style of its side mounts (which suggests the second quarter of the eleventh century) and its iconographic characteristics, particularly of the Crucifixion, which most closely resembles works of c. 1050–64. Moreover, there is an apparent discrepancy between the dates suggested by the altar's design and the metrical structure of its inscription.⁹⁰ The text is not engraved on separate strips but on the same pieces of metal which form the face [50] mounts of the altar, and the epigraphic evidence supports an eleventh-century dating. If it seems unlikely that the inscription was added to the altar nearly a century after the design, then either it represents a very early English example of its metrical type or, more probably, its exemplar could have been of continental rather than English origin. This hypothesis could allow for a later point in the eleventh century for the inscription than that suggested here for the design of the altar face. It has been seen that the iconography does not provide a literal illustration of the text which was unusually arranged to fit an existing design.

The full vigour of the monastic reform movement patronised by King Edgar, which had stimulated a great artistic output, was spent by the opening of the

90 See nn. 8–9.

eleventh century. However, the pictorial style of the period seems to have been revitalised by the middle of the eleventh century and its influence continued in post-Conquest and even in early twelfth-century manuscripts and metalwork.⁹¹ F. Barlow has observed that there were probably as many active monasteries in 1066 as in 1000 and has re-evaluated the once deprecated cultural achievements of the English Church on the eve of the Conquest; in particular, 'the attribution in recent years of MSS to English monasteries in the mid eleventh century is making the Edwardian monastic scene (and Stigand's Winchester and Canterbury) even more respectable'.⁹² The Cluny altar's affinities with such manuscripts have been noted. Some of them were in the collection of Judith of Flanders who was largely in England from her marriage to Tostig Godwinson, Earl of Northumbria, in or before 1051 until 1064–65. She was a noted patron with personal contacts at Winchester and St Bertin and probably at least one Anglo-Saxon scribe in her train. She brought a legendary amount of treasure out of England into exile and widowhood in Flanders. In 1071 she married Welf IV of Bavaria and died in 1094, bequeathing a great many liturgical objects, including portable altars, to his foundation at Weingarten.⁹³ Presumably much of this collection (which included her four surviving gospel books) must have been of Anglo-Saxon and Flemish origin, and its influence on the scriptorium at Weingarten is well known. Several isolated features in these manuscripts are shared by the Cluny altar. Fulda MS Aa 35, fol. 81, c. 1109–32, has a lopped timber *tau* cross, Mary and John are shown larger than Christ, all three have beaded haloes; Fulda Aa 6 has a haloed wingless lion among its evangelist symbols; the border medallions surrounding the dead Christ on a Tree of Life in Pierpont Morgan 710 fol. 10v show the Beasts full-length, the ox and lion wingless, the lion with the clamped and snaking tail.⁹⁴ A little portable reliquary altar in precious materials would have been an appropriate gift or commission for a pious royal lady and inclusion among Judith's liturgical collection would conveniently explain how the Cluny altar escaped the Norman conquerors. But on the present evidence no precise association with Judith's patronage can be claimed; the correspondences between the Cluny altar and works preserved or influenced through the donation of her collection to Weingarten might seem less striking if more contemporary works had survived.

91 Rickert, *op. cit.* n. 72, pp. 47–60; Wormald, 'The Survival of Anglo-Saxon Illumination after the Norman Conquest', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XXX, 1944, pp. 127–45; Lasko, *op. cit.* n. 17, pp. 169–70.

92 *The English Church 1000–1066*, 2nd edn, London 1979, Appendix II, p. 337.

93 Needham, *op. cit.* n. 24, pp. 33–35; *A–S MSS*, n. 12, cat. 93–95 and bibliography.

94 Meta Harrsen, 'The Countess Judith of Flanders and the Library of Weingarten Abbey', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, XXIV, 1930, pp. 1–13, pl. VI, figs. 11, 12; H. Swarzenski, *The Berthold Missal and the Scriptorium of Weingarten Abbey*, New York 1943, pl. III.

ST JOHN AS A FIGURE OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

Text and image in the art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform

The monastic culture of St Dunstan's time approached Scripture through the inherited techniques of spiritual interpretation implicit in the liturgy and in the contemplative prayer of *lectio divina*. Pictorial images in biblical, liturgical and devotional manuscripts often adapted the rhetorical techniques of exegesis to reveal hidden associations between texts, or even incorporated inscriptions from related texts to point to the underlying significance of the image. In particular, the iconography of St John, who was himself regarded as a master exegete, can offer an insight into how monks of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform read Scripture. St John was commonly depicted either among seated author portraits of the four evangelists or standing with the Virgin Mary at the Crucifixion, but in four late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts he is shown standing and writing beside the Cross. This unusual feature has not been discussed in any detail since it was noted by Charles Niver. He raised the question of whether its oldest example, in the Ramsey Psalter (BL Harl. MS 2904, fol. 3v), was the prototype or represented 'a deviation from a more common mode, the variation created by a great artist' and suggested that 'in all likelihood this motif was derived from some sermon, commentary or other text'.¹

The Ramsey Psalter was probably produced at Winchester for Ramsey Abbey or for its founder, Oswald, archbishop of York (972–92), one of St Dunstan's colleagues in promoting the Benedictine reform.² The Crucifixion frontispiece provides an aid to the spiritual interpretation of the Psalms, which were regarded in exegesis and liturgy as revelatory of Christ, and from which the Benedictine office was largely drawn. The inscribed drawing is an eloquent meditation on [165] Scripture (Figure 13.1). The depiction of Christ's side wound and the presence of his mother and beloved disciple at the foot of the Cross are details from St John's gospel, the account of the Passion read during the Good Friday ceremonies. In the verse following the evangelist's unique description of the piercing of Christ's side

1 C. Niver, 'The Psalter in the British Museum, Harley 2904', *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, ed. W. Koehler (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 667–87 at 686.

2 Ibid., pp. 673, 675–81. E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London, 1976), cat. no. 41.



Figure 13.1 The Ramsey Abbey Psalter. © The British Library Board. MS Harley 2904, fol. 3v.

is the assertion: ‘He who saw it has borne witness – his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth – that you also may believe’ (John 19:35). The abbreviated opening of this verse is inscribed in St John’s book in a later example of the iconography, the Winchcombe Psalter (Figure 13.2), but the words he is writing in the Ramsey Psalter picture come from an echo of the verse later in John’s gospel, in the context of the Resurrection appearances which the evangelist describes as signs written in this book, ‘that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God’ (John 20:31). The gospel’s Resurrection testimony is identified with that of the beloved disciple in a verse recalled in the liturgy and in homilies for St John’s feast: ‘This is the disciple who bears witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true’ (John 21:24). This verse, whose opening words, *Hic est discipulus qui testimonium perhibet* [. . .] are written on St John’s scroll in the Ramsey Psalter Crucifixion, is thus transferred from the context of the resurrection and applied to John’s contemplation of the Crucified. The iconography stresses the role of the author as eye-witness but, like the fourth gospel, also uses the action of his physically seeing as a metaphor of spiritual insight.



Figure 13.2 The Winchcombe Psalter. Cambridge University Library. MS. Ff.1.23, fol. 88.

Immediately after the evangelist's description of the piercing of Christ's side is his interpretation of what he has seen: 'All this happened to fulfil the words of scripture' (John 19:36); one of his supporting citations, 'They shall look upon him whom they pierced', derived from Zacharias 12:10, is itself revealed in Scripture and exegesis to be a prophecy. Augustine described it as 'a promise that Christ will come again in the same body in which he was crucified'.³

The fulfilment of the prophecy at the Second Coming, unambiguously revealing Christ's divinity and majesty even to those who once failed to recognise him and crucified him, is described in the opening vision of St John's Book of Revelation, 'Behold [. . .] he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him [. . .] "I am Alpha and Omega" says the Lord God, who is and was and who is to come, the Almighty' (Revelation 1:7–8). An early tenth-century Anglo-Saxon miniature in the Athelstan Psalter (BL, Cotton MS Galba A. xviii, fol. 21), gives pictorial expression to the standard exegetical association of John's

3 Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium*, ed. R. Willems, CCSL xxxvi (Turnhout, 1954), p. 662.



Figure 13.3 The Athelstan Psalter. © The British Library Board. Cotton MS Galba A. xviii, fol. 21.

two texts, in his Gospel and Apocalypse, each citing Zacharias 12:10.⁴ Christ is shown exalted and enthroned among the heavenly choirs and identified by an inscription as Alpha and Omega, but he is also recognisable as the same person who was crucified, because his glorified body still bears the wound where he was pierced (Figure 13.3). Conversely, the Ramsey Psalter frontispiece shows that Christ's glorification [166] does not begin at the Parousia, when it will be generally revealed, but that, for those with eyes to see, the Crucifixion itself is an exaltation or enthronement.

Though the drawing presents a moving devotional image of the dead Christ mourned by his mother, the downward-drooping head of the Virgin is counterpoised by the upturned gaze of St John. Already holding his testimony of the Resurrection, he directs attention to the *titulus* which, in the extended account unique

4 J. O'Reilly, 'Text and Image in Early Medieval Art: the Wounded and Exalted Christ', *Peritia*, vi–vii (1987–88), pp. 72–118, at 84–93.

to his gospel, reads not as the crude irony intended by the Jews (John 19:19–22), but as the proclamation of Christ's royal title. In Augustine's gospel commentary, the *titulus* stands for Christ's universal sovereignty and his divine title. Iconographically, his divinity is suggested in the Ramsey Psalter by showing that his upright body with arms outstretched and palms opened in priestly orans gesture is coterminous with the cosmological dimensions of the Cross.

The iconography of St John writing at the Crucifixion was not created in a vacuum but drew on widely familiar associations. Modern biblical scholarship distinguishes between the disciple John and the authors of the fourth gospel and the Apocalypse; many scholars further distinguish between the disciple John and the 'beloved disciple' who appears only in the fourth gospel and always unnamed.⁵ Patristic exegesis and medieval liturgy honoured a single St John who was at once the fourth evangelist, one of the twelve disciples (the son of Zebedee and brother of James) and the beloved disciple. He was universally revered among the four evangelists as the one who pre-eminently revealed Christ's divinity. His Christology was seen as rising from his privileged source of knowledge as the beloved disciple, so close to the Lord that he leaned on his breast at the Last Supper, stood at the cross and became the son and guardian of Christ's mother, and was the first to believe in the Resurrection (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2–8; 21:7); this eye-witness testimony was extended by subsequent divinely inspired revelation which he recorded in the Apocalypse.

In St Augustine's profoundly influential commentary on St John's gospel, which would have been familiar to the Anglo-Saxon reformers both directly and through intermediaries such as Bede, Alcuin and Ælfric, St John is repeatedly regarded as a figure of the contemplative life and in language which was to offer cues for the pictorial expression of the idea. Like the eagle who alone of all birds can gaze directly at the sun, John was pictured, alone of the evangelists, rising beyond the clouds to behold 'the Word in the beginning, God from God, light from light'; 'John flies up to heaven with the Lord and in speaking of his temporal acts recognises also the eternal power of his divinity through which all things are made, his mind in lofty flight and limpid speculation, and by his writing transmits to us what we should know'.⁶

Jerome's gospel preface, commentaries on the fourth gospel and on the Apocalypse [167] as well as the monastic office and homilies for the feast of St John all perpetuated the tradition of his multiple roles and life-long chastity. John's authorship of both gospel and Revelation is also clearly assumed in a Carolingian work and its daughter manuscript derived from an Early Christian Apocalypse

5 R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (London, 1971), I, pp. lxxxvii–civ.

6 Alcuin, *Epistola ad Gislam et Rictrudem* prefacing *Commentariorum in Joannem*, PL C, col. 742, 744; also Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, Lib. I, cap. 4, PL., xxxiv, col. 1045; Bede, *Opera homiletica*, Homelia I, 8, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL cxxii (Turnhout, 1955), pp. 52–53; M. Schapiro, 'Two Romanesque Drawings in Auxerre', *Romanesque Art. Selected Papers* (New York, 1977), pp. 307–10.



Figure 13.4 Apocalypse. Médiathèque d'Agglomération de Cambrai, MS B 386, fol. 21. Cliché CNRS/IRHT.

cycle.⁷ The seated evangelist portrait normally found in gospel books is here used to depict St John receiving the apocalyptic vision beneath the *dextera Dei*. The version in Cambrai, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 386, fol. 21 (Figure 13.4) includes a possible anticipation of the draped lectern motif popular in evangelist portraits of the Anglo-Saxon reform period and until recently regarded as a late insular innovation.⁸ John's sharply upturned gaze, poised pen and visionary's scroll unwinding across his body bear some broad correspondence to the figure of St John writing at the Crucifixion in the Ramsey Psalter, where he has a scroll

7 R. Laufner and P. Klein, *Trierer Apokalypse. Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat des Codex 51 der Stadtbibliothek Trier* (Graz, 1975), Tafel IX, Abb. 17, Tafel XV, Abb. 26.

8 C. Nordenfalk, 'The Draped Lectern', in *Intuition und Kunstwissenschaft, Festschrift für Hanns Swarzenski* (Berlin, 1973), pp. 81–100 at 91. For rare early examples of the draped lectern see J. Rosenthal, 'The Unique Architectural Settings of the Arenberg Evangelists', *Studien zur Mittelalterlichen Kunst 800–1250. Festschrift für Florentine Mutherich*, ed. K. Bierbrauer, P.K. Klein, W. Sauerländer (Munich, 1985), pp. 145–55, at 146–47, n. 16. I am indebted to Dr M. Budny for this reference.



Figure 13.5 Collegiale Saint Mexme, relief from façade. Chinon, Indre-et-Loire.

rather than the codex normally carried by St John at the Cross and where his unusual pose is directly derived from that of a seated author type.

Carolingian and Ottonian ivories occasionally incorporated seated writing evangelists in Crucifixion scenes but showed all four authors, grouped together with their symbolic beasts, either above or below the Cross, or in the four corners, in addition to the standing figures of Mary and John flanking the Cross.⁹ An unfinished tenth-century bas-relief at Chinon shows a conventional evangelist portrait of John alone, seated beneath an architectural arch and holding a codex, but, very unusually, he is placed beside the Cross watching the piercing of Christ's side; the customary standing figures of Mary and John are omitted (Figure 13.5).¹⁰ Contrary to St John's eye-witness testimony in the gospel text at this point (John 19:33–35), Christ is shown alive and attended by sun and moon in order to suggest the evangelist's spiritual insight in interpreting the piercing of Christ's side as a revelation

9 P. Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800–1200* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pls. 41, 141, 173.

10 Bas-relief on façade of Saint-Mexme, Chinon (Indre-et-Loire), G. Thoby, *Le Crucifix* (Nantes, 1959), pl. XL, fig. 89. I am grateful to Mlle Claire Sibut for the photograph.

of his divine identity (John 19:36–37; Revelation 1:7). The visual awkwardness of the Chinon experiment, however, does much to explain the popularity in the Anglo-Saxon reform period of adapting the seated evangelist portrait of St John to a standing figure; this also has the great advantage of being readily assimilated to the popular devotional tableau of Christ's mother and beloved disciple standing at the foot of the Cross and of being compatible with other iconographic elements to give a variety of interpretative nuance. Furthermore, the figure of St John writing at the Crucifixion adds something of the evangelist portrait's traditional associations to the iconography of the Crucifixion. [168] The meaning and originality of the image in the Ramsey Psalter and the possible significance of the variations in the three remaining Anglo-Saxon examples of the motif therefore need to be considered in the more general context of the insular iconography of St John the Evangelist, which was characterised by ingenious devices for depicting his distinctiveness among the four evangelists, drawing on an exegetical and iconographic tradition by no means peculiar to late Anglo-Saxon England. Not only the Late Antique, early Insular and Carolingian features apparent in some Anglo-Saxon evangelist pictures but the portraits of St John surviving in Carolingian books known to have been in England in the tenth century hint at the range of materials available to artists of the Benedictine reform period.¹¹

The Ramsey Psalter has a Gallican text, and the style of its Crucifixion drawing and iconographic details such as the Virgin's mourning gesture have Carolingian precedent. Ramsey's founder St Oswald and its prior Germanus had studied at the monastic house of Fleury and Abbot of Fleury taught at Ramsey; 'for a time it is probable that Ramsey was in closer touch with continental learning than any other house of the English revival'.¹² The hand of the Ramsey Psalter artist has been detected in works produced at Fleury and at St Bertin, including the Boulogne Gospels (Boulogne, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 11). Among its evangelist author portraits, John is shown seated at a draped lectern beside a draped altar in a church (Figure 13.6). His accompanying eagle is gazing up and straining heavenwards with open wings, bearing a codex inscribed with the exalted opening of John's gospel which succinctly recognises Christ's divinity: *In principio erat Verbum*. The brooding figure of the evangelist receives dictation directly from the dove of the Holy Spirit.¹³ The pictorialisation of exegesis is also evident in the

11 *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art, 966–1066*, ed. J. Backhouse, D.H. Turner, L. Webster (London, 1984), no. 3; *An Early Breton Gospel Book*, ed. J.J.G. Alexander (Cambridge, Roxburghe Club, 1977), p. 9, pl. H; M. Schapiro, 'Two Romanesque Drawings in Auxerre', pp. 307–10, for early insular and Carolingian iconography of St John.

12 F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1947), p. 445; E. John, 'The World of Abbot Aelfric', *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society. Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill*, eds. P. Wormald, D. Bullough, R. Collins (Oxford, 1983), pp. 300–16, for connection between Aelfric and other English reformers and Fleury; C. Niver, see n. 2.

13 Fol. 107; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 708, fol. 66v, where the inspiring eagle descends to dictate into John's ear; cf. Monte Cassino, Archivio della Badia, MS BB, 437, 439, p. 166,



Figure 13.6 The Boulogne Gospels. Boulogne, Bibliothèque municipale de Boulogne-sur-Mer, MS 11, fol. 107.

related contemporary Arenberg Gospels (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 869, fol. 126v). Alone of the four evangelists John gazes up towards the hand of God, his head acutely inclined, as in the Ramsey Psalter frontispiece (Figure 13.7). Jane Rosenthal has suggested that his depiction as though floating upwards through space within a church interior is ‘a literal illustration of his celestial [169] character’.¹⁴ The verse from the *Carmen Paschale* inscribed around his soaring eagle refers to John flying to the Word like the eagle to the stars.

The Arenberg Gospels’ positioning of John’s feet on a footstool shown in vertical perspective, so that one foot appears to be higher than the other on a diagonally inclined plane, is commonly found in seated evangelist portraits. Such a pose is adopted by the seated figure of St Matthew in the mid-eleventh-century

where the inspiring dove takes possession of John by descending on his head: his eagle is above the gospel opening on the facing page; E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. nos. 44, 94, 95.

14 ‘The Unique Architectural Settings of the Arenberg Evangelists’, pp. 151–52.



Figure 13.7 The Arenberg Gospels. The Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.869, fol. 126v. Purchased with the assistance of the Fellows and the special assistance of Mr. William S. Glazier, 1954.

gospel book of Judith of Flanders (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 709, fol. 2v, Figure 13.8). It forms almost a mirror image of the *standing* figure of St John writing his testimony at the crucifixion in the same book's frontispiece, fol. 1v (Figure 13.9), where his raised foot is placed on a rocky outcrop. This curious detail recurs in less exaggerated form in another of the four examples of John writing at the Crucifixion, the Winchcombe Psalter (Figure 13.2). It is to be distinguished from some Carolingian and late Anglo-Saxon scenes of the Crucifixion (including that in the Ramsey Psalter) which show both the Virgin and St John standing on raised groundlines beneath the arms of the larger-scale figure of Christ. Instead, in Judith of Flanders's gospel book Mary's feet actually project onto the lower frame of the miniature and in the Winchcombe Psalter she stands outside the frame; in both she is interposed between the spectator and the Crucified, while St John is stepping up on raised ground. This could possibly be explained as a rationalisation: deriving their standing figure of St John from a seated evangelist type, either directly or from a revered model such as the Ramsey



Figure 13.8 The Gospels of Judith of Flanders. The Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.709, fol. 2v. Purchased by J.P. Morgan (1867–1943) in 1926.

Psalter, the artists may have supplied the resultant awkwardly positioned upper foot with a footrest which, because of the outdoor setting, takes the form of a raised rocky groundline. Such a naturalistic interpretation, however, apart from its anachronism, does not explain the Winchcombe Psalter example, where John's bent right knee cannot conceivably act as a support for the book he is holding on his left side. It is perhaps more likely in the context that Judith of Flanders's gospels and the Winchcombe Psalter have further adapted the seated evangelist type to their purpose and that their motif of John stepping up on high ground or a miniature rocky hill is another instance of pictorial exegesis, like the detail of John gazing upwards which is common to all four examples.

At the opening of his commentary on John's gospel, Augustine repeatedly describes the evangelist as one of the mountains mentioned in Psalm 71:3, that receive peace on behalf of the people. Augustine explains that such mountains are strong souls receiving and transmitting to lesser souls illumination from Wisdom itself; this divine Wisdom, which is beyond natural human understanding,



Figure 13.9 The Gospels of Judith of Flanders. Frontispiece with Crucifixion. The Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.709, fol. 1v. Purchased by J.P. Morgan (1867–1943) in 1926.

did not simply come down to John, but he rose up to it. Augustine describes John as elevated far above the other evangelists, rising heavenwards above all peaks of the earth, above all things created by the Word in order to arrive at him by whom all things are made and to contemplate the divinity of the Word: ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God’. This mystical ascent is a model for the individual Christian soul lifting up his eyes to the Scriptures, rising above the carnal to the spiritual interpretation. Augustine exhorts [170] his reader, ‘Raise yourself up to the evangelist, rise to his meaning’.¹⁵ The unusual iconography of St John stepping or climbing on raised ground would seem to combine something of this patristic image of John as a mountain rising heavenwards with the more familiar one of him ascending above the clouds, like the eagle. In exegesis both are unambiguously images of contemplative prayer and help explain why St John would have been

15 In *Johannis evangelium*, *Tractatus* I, 2–7, pp. 1–4.

a particularly important model for the monastic vocation being renewed in the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform.

Unlike the Ramsey Psalter example, in the Crucifixion scene in Judith of Flanders's gospels neither John's book nor the *titulus* on the cross is inscribed and the motif of St John writing is combined with elements which are not present in the earlier picture: the sun and moon, the patron at the foot of the cross and the unusual tree-trunk form of the cross. Only three other Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion scenes have survived which show this rough-hewn cross and all are from the second and third quarters of the eleventh century: the engraved portable altar in the Musée de Cluny, the Tiberius Psalter (BL, Cotton MS Tiberius C. vi, fol. 13) and the Arundel Psalter (BL, Arundel MS 60, fol. 12v). The motif does appear earlier however, in the depiction of the cross as a tropaeum in the Harley Psalter (c. 1000–20), and there are grounds for thinking that, like other iconographic motifs once regarded as late Anglo-Saxon innovations, the rough-hewn cross was of much earlier origin.¹⁶ It is possible, therefore, that the image of St John writing at the Crucifixion, first extant in the late tenth-century Ramsey Psalter, could have been combined with the iconography of the hewn cross earlier than the mid-eleventh century date suggested by the example in Judith of Flanders's gospels. The stylistic and iconographic differences between the four surviving examples of the hewn cross suggest they were not slavishly copied from a single pictorial model. The image acts as a working idea that can be combined with other elements to convey a variety of nuances. The same may be claimed for the motif of St John writing.

In the frontispiece of Judith of Flanders's gospels, John is stirred into writing and the Virgin staunches her Son's wound with a tender, emotive gesture, but the focus is their witness, the intensity of their upward gaze. As the sun and moon do not feature in St John's gospel account of the Crucifixion and as the veiled sun and moon only appear twice in late Anglo-Saxon art, each time with St John writing, it is worth asking what their combination might have suggested to contemporaries. The gaunt cross towering like an ensign to the clouds and the darkened sun and moon are evocative of the three synoptic gospels' eschatological prophecies that at the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds in heaven, 'the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light' (Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24). Matthew continues with the prophecy of the sign of the Son of Man in [171] the heavens (which was universally interpreted as the cross). These passages, employing Old Testament apocalyptic language, preface the synoptic gospels' account of the Passion and permeate their descriptions of the cosmic upheaval at the Crucifixion 'when there was darkness over the whole earth' from the sixth to

16 BL, Harl. MS 603, fol. 12. J. O'Reilly, 'The Rough-Hewn Cross in Anglo-Saxon Art', *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500–1200*, ed. M. Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987), pp. 153–58, pl. V; for the hewn Cross in the Tiberius Psalter, the Cluny portable altar and the Arundel Psalter see pls. I, II, IV.

the ninth hour. This is echoed by St John, not in his gospel account of the Crucifixion, but in his vision of the Second Coming in the Apocalypse: 'The third part of the sun was smitten and the third part of the moon [. . .] the day shone not for a third part of it' (Revelation 8:12; cf. Acts 2:20).

In Judith of Flanders's gospels frontispiece, the personifications of sun and moon veil their hands and faces as in the Late Antique iconography of tributary kings doing obeisance to the Emperor. In several homilies St Æthelwold's pupil, Ælfric abbot of Eynsham, following patristic exegesis, cites the darkening sun and the heavenly bodies hiding their beams at the Crucifixion as an illustration of how all creatures acknowledged their Creator at his Passion, except those who crucified him because they failed to see, or recognise, his identity.¹⁷ The image receives a further gloss from a passage in the *Regularis Concordia*, the monastic customary associated with St Dunstan and St Æthelwold. It describes a Holy Week ceremony designed to arouse 'compunction of soul by means of the outward representation of that which is spiritual'. During the nights of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Eve, the hymn from Philippians 2:8, is repeatedly sung in total darkness: 'And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross'. This ceremony in the dark, the *Regularis Concordia* explains, 'sets forth clearly both the terror of that darkness which at our Lord's Passion struck the tripartite world with unwonted fear, and the consolation of the apostolic preaching which revealed to the whole world Christ obedient to his Father even unto death for the salvation of the human race'.¹⁸

The hymn from Philippians, after describing Christ's descent into death, paradoxically continues 'Wherefore hath God exalted him [. . .] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth'. It is John's gospel which consistently presents the Crucifixion as an exaltation, despite outward appearances. In Judith's gospel frontispiece, the small patron figure (and presumably the beholder) are invited to share St John's insight into the event. She looks up at the means of her redemption, bowing the knee, acknowledging with the veiled sun and moon the Creator-Logos in the Crucified. Seen with the eye of faith, the rough-hewn, man-made gibbet bearing Christ's descent into humanity and death can be perceived as the cosmological Tree of Life.

The third example of St John writing at the Crucifixion may help substantiate such a reading. The mid-eleventh-century Winchcombe Psalter (Cambridge University Library, MS Ff. 1.23, fol. 88), which Michael Lapidge suggests may [172] have been produced for Ramsey,¹⁹ shows John writing out a quotation from his own gospel concerning his eye-witness testimony (Figure 13.2). Unlike the Ramsey Psalter, however, he refers not to John 21:24, but to John 19:35, *et ego vidi et testimonium*, words from his description of the piercing of Christ's side. In

17 Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. B. Thorpe (London, 1844), I, p. 109; II, p. 257.

18 *Regularis Concordia*, ed. and transl. T. Symons (London, 1953), pp. 36–37.

19 I am grateful to Dr Lapidge for this information. E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. no. 80.

the Winchcombe Psalter, as in Judith of Flanders's gospel frontispiece, John gazes up intently at the dead Christ with wounded side and steps up on raised ground, rising from the literal to a spiritual interpretation of the Crucifixion. In both manuscripts John's apocalyptic visionary role seems important to the interpretation of the cross as the cosmic Tree of Life; the Winchcombe Psalter does not use the hewn tree-trunk cross iconography but does clearly label the cross *lignum vit(a)e*, and both works use the veiled sun and moon as symbols of its cosmic sovereignty.

Furthermore, it is the Apocalypse which provides a second scriptural source for the image of St John writing under inspiration, for at its very opening he again insists on his eye-witness testimony, 'who bare the record of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ and of all things that he saw' (Revelation 1:2); the first of his recorded visions of Christ in glory fulfills, as has been seen, John's own prophetic quotation of Zacharias 12:10, in his gospel account of the piercing of Christ's side. The same Lord revealed in glory as Alpha and Omega when 'every eye shall see him and they also which pierced him', directly commands John: 'what thou see, write in a book [. . .] Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things which shall be hereafter' (Revelation 1:11, 19). This injunction is repeated at the end of the Apocalypse, 'And he that sat upon the throne [. . .] said to me, Write, for these words are faithful and true [. . .] I am Alpha and Omega' (Revelation 21:5). John's testimony is also referred to in the culminating apocalyptic vision, which is of the Tree of Life and water of life. The enthroned Lord assures the faithful they will feed on the *lignum vitae* and tells John, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render every man according to his works' (Revelation 22:12–14). The suggestion that the designer of the Winchcombe Psalter may have had John's apocalyptic as well as his evangelical role in mind when depicting the evangelist's interpretation of the Cross as the *lignum vitae* in the illustration at the first division of the Psalter (Figure 13.2), is strengthened by the fact that the next illustration, at the Psalter's second division, shows Christ in majesty with an inscription echoing Revelation 22:12, 'I am God who renders to every man according to his works' (Figure 13.10).

For monastic contemporaries the connection between John's account of the Crucifixion and his closing apocalyptic vision would already have been familiar through standard exegesis on the wound in Christ's side. The chain of texts connecting the piercing of Christ's side in John 19:34, both with the prophecy in Zacharias 12:10: 'They shall look on me whom they have pierced', and with John's apocalyptic vision of the glorified Christ with wounded side (Revelation 1:7), was often extended by allusion to another exegetical chain which also focused on John's [173] eye-witness as an image of spiritual insight. In John 2:19–22, Christ's body is identified with the Temple; commentators read this to interpret Christ's body as the Church and the opening of his side as the source of the sacraments. The sacramental flow from Christ's wound seen by the Evangelist John thus fulfilled Ezekiel's vision of the water of life flowing from the right side of the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 47:1), which is in turn evoked in St John's own eschatological vision of the healing water of life and tree of life



Figure 13.10 The Winchcombe Psalter. Cambridge University Library. MS. Ff.1.23, fol. 171r.

in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:1). The linking of these texts of vision and seeing was expressed liturgically in the Easter vigil antiphon *Vidi aquam*. In harmony with the established connection between Ezekiel's vision and the emission from Christ's side, an Early Christian Apocalypse cycle preserved in Carolingian works conflates John's vision of the water of life (Revelation 22:1) with his earlier identification of the Temple in the New Jerusalem as the glorified Christ (Revelation 21:22). In a single image, the water of life is shown flowing directly from the side of the Temple, witnessed by the visionary St John, who is seated as in an evangelist portrait and is obeying the divine injunction to write down what is being revealed to him (Revelation 22:5).²⁰ The pictorial exegesis of the Apocalypse illustration offers a parallel to the image of John as seated evangelist witnessing the wound in Christ's side in the bas-relief at Chinon (Figure 13.5),

20 Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. 31, fol. 73; Cambrai, Bibl. Mun., MS 386, fol. 45; R. Laufner and P. Klein, *Trierer Apokalypse*, Abb. 26; É. Ó Carragáin, '*Vidi Aquam*: the Liturgical Background to the *Dream of the Rood* 20a', *Notes and Queries*, ccxxviii (1983), pp. 8–15, n. 20.

or actually writing out his testimony beside the Cross, as in the Ramsey Psalter, Judith of Flanders's Gospels and the Winchcombe Psalter; it has already been suggested that their iconography of John as a standing figure is ultimately derived from a seated author type. The Crucifixion scenes in all three examples emphasise the emission from Christ's wound, which is only described in John 19:34, and the Winchcombe Psalter shows John writing out words from the next verse of his gospel, *et ego vidi et testimonium*.

The fourth surviving example of St John writing at the Crucifixion is inserted in a tiny prayer book which belonged to Ælfwine, dean and then abbot of the New Minster, Winchester, c. 1032–35 (BL, Cotton MS Titus D. xxvii, fol. 65v).²¹ Christ is shown alive on the Cross and the side wound is not indicated; St John is a bearded standing figure neither derived from a seated evangelist type nor in the act of climbing or rising (Figure 13.11). These striking iconographic differences from the examples in the earlier Ramsey Psalter and the later Winchcombe Psalter and Judith of Flanders's gospels must raise the question whether the New Minster [174] prayer book artist is not simply borrowing from the motif and putting a pen in St John's hand as an attribute. There are, however, some indications that the presence in Ælfwine's prayer book of St John writing does have an exegetical significance, not least because the remaining drawing, bound in the book on fol. 75v (Figure 13.12), alerts us to the kind of mind at work and introduces an exegetical debate whose relevance to an interpretation of the Crucifixion picture on fol. 65v and to an understanding of the importance of Johannine Christology in contemporary monasticism has not so far been explored.

Ernst Kantorowicz noted that the two identical seated figures on fol. 75v are pictorially derived from the Utrecht Psalter's illustration to Psalm 109:1, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit down at my right hand and I will make your enemies your footstool'. He felt that the two Lords 'represent quite obviously the Father and the Son' and that, together with the Virgin, Child and the dove (who are pictorially derived from the Gloria and Credo illustrations in the Utrecht Psalter) they make up 'a garbled rendering of the triune deity', 'a weird Quinity'.²² He explained the defeated figure of Arius in terms of fourth-century Christological controversy; through the refutation of Arianism in patristic commentaries on Psalm 109, particularly those of Jerome, Augustine and Cassiodorus, the Psalm continued to be

21 E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. 77. Fols. 65v and 75v are now taped in the centre margins but each seems to be on the second verso of a bifolium which is otherwise blank (except for a short text on fol. 74). The appropriately tiny scale of the drawings, their stylistic similarity to the scene of the donor and St Peter in BL Cotton MS Titus D. xxvi, fol. 19v (originally bound after the material now bound in Titus D. xxvii) and their thematic suitability to the prayers of the Cross and the Trinity which they preface suggests that even if they were not original to the book, they were made or chosen to be inserted in it. Ælfwine's ownership is referred to in a cryptogram on fol. 13v, his name is inscribed on the drawing on fol. 65v.

22 E. Kantorowicz, 'The Quinity of Winchester', *Art Bulletin*, xxix (1947), pp. 73–85 at 79, 81. Figs. 1, 13, 14 for Utrecht Psalter fols. 64v (Ps 109), 89v (Gloria), 90 (Credo).

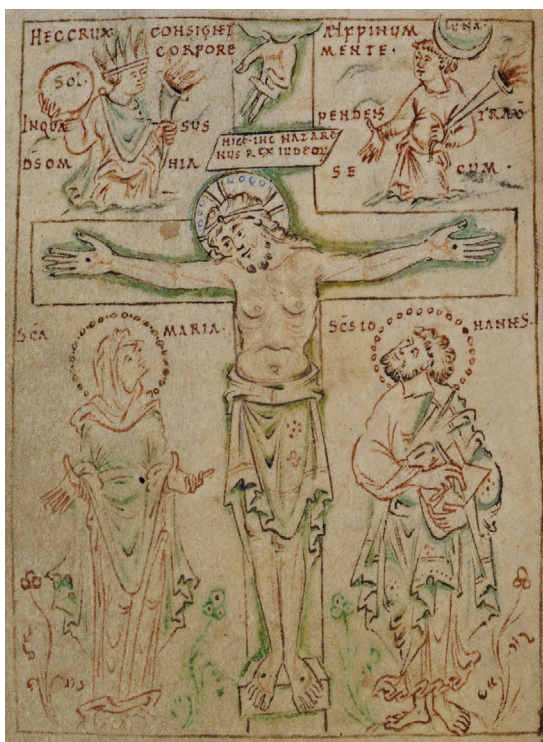


Figure 13.11 Prayer book of Ælfwine of New Minster. © The British Library Board. Cotton MS Titus D. xxvii, fol. 65v.

associated with the name of Arius long after the Arian controversy. Judith Kidd has criticised the limitations of such an explanation focusing on Psalm 109 exegesis which renders the drawing on fol. 75v ‘an amalgam of inherited images embodying a narrowly defined theological tradition’, and argues that in Ælfwine’s prayer book the drawing ‘serves as a preface to office and prayers which have nothing to do with the Psalm’.²³

Below the medallion enclosing the two enthroned Lords with the defeated enemy as a footstool are the labelled figures of ‘Arrius’ and Judas, naked and in chains beside hellmouth (Figure 13.12). They do not appear in the Utrecht Psalter’s illustration of Psalm 109 but probably refer to the Psalm’s second verse, *Et dominare in medio inimicorum quorum*, interpreted in patristic exegesis as Christ’s exaltation over pagans, Jews, heretics and false brethren, or simply Jews

23 J. Kidd, ‘The Quinity of Winchester Reconsidered’, *Studies in Iconography*, vii–viii (1981–82), pp. 21–33 at 21, 26.



Figure 13.12 Prayer book of Ælfwine of New Minster. © The British Library Board. Cotton MS Titus D. xxvii, fol. 75v.

and heretics.²⁴ As his name suggests, Judas was commonly seen as the type of the Jew, just as Arius, ‘the first heresiarch to be condemned by an ecumenical council’, was regarded as the archetypal heretic.²⁵ In tradition Arius shared the fate of Judas (Acts 1:18). Significantly, both Jews and Arians were censured for their false interpretation of Scripture and specifically of Psalm 109. In all three synoptic gospels Christ quotes Psalm 109:1, in full and puts its interpretation as a test case in exegesis: the Jewish scribes and pharisees wrongly interpreted it to mean that the expected messiah would simply be *filius David* (Matthew 22:41–46). Christ’s challenge to the [175] Jewish interpretation is cited in patristic exegesis of Psalm 109:1, and extended to those who are still circumcised in their hearts. Again, Jewish exegesis is expressly refuted by St Peter’s interpretation of the Psalm opening in the earliest Christian confession of faith which identifies the second Lord of

24 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos CI–CL*, CCSL xl (Turnhout, 1956), p. 1610.

25 A. Louth, reviewing R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London, 1987), in *Theology*, (1988), p. 430.

Psalm 109:1, not with David but with the crucified and risen Jesus, exalted both as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:30–35). In his commentary on Acts, Bede refutes Arian misinterpretation of this text too by citing Jerome's exegesis of Psalm 109:1.²⁶

Psalm 109, which is prescribed for daily recitation at Vespers in the Rule of St Benedict, is the most quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament and early Christian literature. It was therefore important long before the Arian controversy when the orthodox interpretation of the Psalm's opening image was incorporated in the Nicene Creed. In the New Testament and in patristic exegesis the two Lords of the Psalm's first verse were interpreted as referring to the Father and the Son but, as a means of affirming the exaltation of Jesus and the subjection of all things to him (e.g. Hebrews 1:3, 13). The Arians, however, tended to lift texts out of context and read them literally.²⁷ They seized on Psalm 109:1, to support their own belief that God the Father must have been greater than the Son he ordered to sit at his right hand and that there must, therefore, have been a time when the Son was not. This fundamental challenge to Christ's co-eternity and equality with the Father, crucial to the whole doctrine of the Trinity, was rebutted by patristic spiritual interpretation of Scripture, read in context and as a whole, further refining understanding of Psalm 109:1, as alluding to the relationship of the divine and human natures of Christ exalted in the glory of the Father. The text which permeated their reading of the enigmatic Psalm and most powerfully asserted the divinity of Christ and his identification with the incarnate Lord was St John's gospel. Although they do quote, very selectively, from Christ's great discourse on his relationship with the Father, which extends over chapters 14–17, this discourse itself contains passages, such as 19:28, which are notoriously susceptible to unorthodox interpretation. Commentators on Psalm 109 therefore repeatedly quote the majestic opening statement of the gospel in which John's Christology is acceptably summarised: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. St John was cited to refute Jewish exegesis: *Verbum caro factum est, ut habitares in nobis: ecce filius David*, and he was also used to counter the Arians and sustain the faithful. In his commentary on the Psalms, Augustine said that if the opening of Psalm 109 continues to pose a problem about the divinity of Christ, we have been given the answer: *In principio erat Verbum*.²⁸ Nor was the debate confined to exegesis of the Psalm. Referring to the [176] opening words of St John in his commentary on the gospel, Augustine intones 'Now let the infidel Arian step forward and claim that the Word of God was made:

26 Bede, *Opera Exegetica 4, Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, CCSL cxxi (Turnhout, 1983), Exp. II 34, pp. 21–22.

27 T.E. Pollard, 'The Exegesis of Scripture and the Arian Controversy', *Bull. of the John Rylands Lib.*, xlii (1958), pp. 414–29, for Athanasius's criticism of the Arians's failure to observe the cardinal principles in interpretation, namely the sufficiency, scope, custom, sense, style and context of Scripture. See D.M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand. Psalm 110 [109] in Early Christianity* (Nashville, 1973) for pre-Arian exegesis of the psalm.

28 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos CI–CL*, pp. 1606, 1605.



Figure 13.13 Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 15, fol. 56v.

How can the Word of God have been made? [. . .] Do not believe that the Word, by whom all was made, was itself also created'.²⁹ He prefaces his discussion of John's gospel by explaining that no one naturally understands the things of God: we need wings to rise above the carnal meaning to the spiritual meaning 'of that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard', and John was inspired by God to speak of these mysteries.

Such exegesis is depicted at the opening of John's Gospel in the Bible of Stephen Harding, English abbot of Cîteaux (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 15, fol. 56v). The book was produced c. 1109/10 when English and particularly Canterbury influences are evident in Cîteaux manuscripts. St John's soaring eagle bears a scroll inscribed with the gospel *incipit* and seizes the head of a seated figure who holds a scroll inscribed, *Arrius. Erat aliquando quando non erat* (Figure 13.13). Charles Oursel saw this as a portrait of St John in the guise of a Cistercian monk, his senses being imprinted by his inspiring eagle. Walter Cahn has argued that the figure 'is not the enraptured Evangelist, but a partisan of Arius, if not

29 Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium*, *Tractatus* I, 11, p. 6.

the heresiarch himself' and noted that his inscription is excerpted from the Arian propositions anathematised at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Oursel's view implies that the seated figure's declamatory gesture is refuting rather than propounding the Arian text he holds; Cahn however, sees the eagle as punishing and defeating heresy.³⁰ Other ambiguities in the Greux image invite further speculation on its function. Unlike the eagle, the seated figure is not haloed, and he does not have a gospel book, but neither is he shown as naked, diminished or overturned and he is given a prominent position in the illuminated initial of the gospel opening. The lettering of his scroll faces outwards; that on the scroll lowered before his gaze by the eagle confronts him legibly and provides the name of the author and the text by which Arius's false interpretation of Scripture may be refuted: *Johannes. In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud D(eu)m*. The words are repeated in the page's right column of gospel text exactly alongside the seated figure. Grasped in the talons of the eagle, he is literally given wings to rise heavenwards through this text. He is seated on a floating cushion which is not anchored to any chair; his legs hang loosely. The eagle's claws pierce his eyes, ears and mouth, perhaps suggesting that this tonsured, white-cowled figure is being borne up to a recognition of Christ's true identity proclaimed in St John's words on the eagle's scroll. The image may be seen as a pictorial equivalent of Augustine's insistence to his monks on the need for wings to rise above the carnal to the spiritual interpretation of the divine mysteries, of which St John was divinely inspired to speak. At the beginning of his commentary on St John's opening words Augustine says, 'there must be of necessity among you many natural men who as yet know [177] according to the flesh and cannot yet raise themselves to spiritual understanding'; he urges them in reading Scripture to rise to the Evangelist's meaning, to contemplate the divinity of the Word. Arius is the extreme example of those who fail to do this and who divide the Church by their false interpretation. The Cistercian reader pondering the text and image in Stephen Harding's Bible is invited in *lectio divina* to aspire to the meaning of St John, the model of all contemplatives, whose life and sources of spiritual insight are set out in the gospel preface on the same page.

There is some evidence to indicate that for a late Anglo-Saxon monastic audience too, allusion to Arius was not simply a fossilised survival of a remote debate (still less a topical allusion to a hitherto unknown outbreak of Arianism in eleventh-century Winchester) which his presence in fol. 75v of Ælfwine's prayer book might at first suggest.

Ælfric, drawing heavily on St Augustine, describes the heresy of Arius in some detail in his vernacular homily on the Nicene Creed: 'He would make Christ less than he is, and diminish the dignity of his Godhead'.³¹ In the Eadui Gospels

30 C. Oursel, *Miniatures Cisterciennes* (Mâcon, 1960), p. 27; W. Cahn, 'A Defense of the Trinity in the Cîteaux Bible', *Marsyas*, xi (1962–64), pp. 58–62 at 59, and *Romanesque Bible Illustration* (Cornell, 1982), pp. 143, 270.

31 Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies* I, p. 291, in context of detailed Augustinian exposition on the Trinity, pp. 275–91.



Figure 13.14 The Eadui Gospels. Museum August Kestner, Hanover. MS WM XXIIa 36, fol. 147v.

(Hanover, Kestner Museum, MS WM XXIIa 36) produced in Canterbury c. 1020, the three synoptic writers are shown with codices, and John alone has a scroll with an inscription, fol. 147v (Figure 13.14). He tramples underfoot a small figure labelled 'Arrius' who holds a summary of his heresy inscribed on a scroll upside down: *Erat tempus quando non erat*. In order to refute this and affirm Christ's pre-existent divinity, John's scroll, which extends down to Arius's ear, carries a longer than usual extract from the gospel opening: *In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud D(eu)m et D(eu)s erat Verbum H(oc) erat in principio*. This image closely reflects the use made in patristic exegesis of John 1:1, to defeat Arians who say *tempus quando non erat Filius*.³² Fol. 147v is not an eccentric intrusion into an otherwise conventional series of evangelist portraits but triumphantly concludes the Christological statement begun by the book's opening double-page illustration, fols. 9v–10. In the first tympanum of the arcaded canon tables is the hand of the Creator holding dividers and scales; Christ with cruciform nimbus

32 Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum LXXI–CL*, CCSL xcvi (Turnhout, 1956), p. 1009.

is shown in the corresponding position on the facing page (Figure 13.15, Figure 13.16). The iconography of the dividers and scales to signify the Creator (and shown held by Christ the Creator-Logos in an eleventh-century English miniature used as a Genesis frontispiece),³³ is partly derived from Sap. 11:21, *Omnia in mensura, et numero et pondere deposuisti*. This text is actually quoted by Augustine in his commentary on John 1:3: *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil*.³⁴ It is used to continue Augustine's argument, begun in his exegesis of John's previous two verses, that the all-creating Word cannot himself have been made and explicitly refutes the Arians who claim, *Verbum Dei factum est*.

Thus the opening illustrations set over the first canon table's concordance of [178] the four gospels in the Eadui gospel book and St John's refutation of Arius at the culmination of the four evangelist portraits are thematically related. Together the illustrations show that the incarnate Christ who is revealed in the four gospels is also the Creator-Logos. In the context of the Eadui Gospels, Arius and his text could function for an informed audience as a visual shorthand allusion to a scriptural chain and could highlight by antithesis the Christology succinctly summarised in the opening lines of John's gospel; the image shows the continuing importance of John's spiritual insight for the present reader, which is central to Augustinian exegesis on the gospel's opening text. While it may be true to say that fol. 75v of Ælfwine's prayer book is 'an amalgam of inherited images', the appearance of other constituent elements of his picture elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon art – for example, the defeated Arius in the Eadui Gospels, the Virgin overshadowed by the dove in the canon table programme of the Arenberg Gospels or the two enthroned Lords in the Godwin ivory seal-die³⁵ – shows with what creativity selections were made from Carolingian and ultimately Late Antique art and adapted to new contexts to enunciate contemporary theological interests during the Anglo-Saxon reform.

The most elaborate treatment of an evangelist portrait as a vehicle for extended theological statement occurs in a manuscript related to the Eadui Gospels, the Grimbold Gospels (BL, Add. MS 34890), c. 1020. St John is pictured as both evangelist and visionary, rapt in contemplation. He is seated beside a draped lectern with pen raised, holding his scroll with veiled hand and gazing heavenwards. His eagle hovers over him with outstretched wings, bearing a scroll. The divine mystery John is seeing with the inner eye and which in turn he reveals in his writing, is represented in the borders of both this and the facing page framing his gospel's opening words (fols. 114v–115, Figure 13.17; *Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, pl. XVI). Immediately above John the three Persons of the Trinity

33 BL, Royal MS 1 E. VII, fol. lv; E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. no. 102, fig. 319.

34 Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium, Tractatus I*, 13, p. 8.

35 J. Rosenthal, *The Historiated Canon Tables of the Arenberg Gospels* (Ann Arbor, 1985), pp. 234–45, pl. 5; *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966–1066*, cat. no. 112.

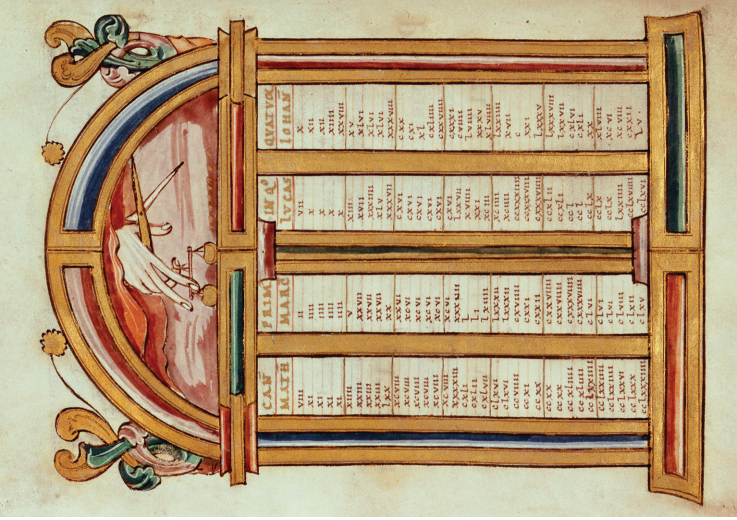


Figure 13.15 The Eadui Gospels. Museum August Kestner, Hanover. MS WM XX1a 36, fol. 9v.



Figure 13.16 The Eadui Gospels. Museum August Kestner, Hanover. MS WM XX1a 36, fol. 10.



Figure 13.17 The Grimbold Gospels. © The British Library Board. MS Add. 34890, fol. 114v.

are separately enthroned; the figures are identical, except that the second Person is crossnimbed. In the upper border of the facing page, in the central position corresponding to that of the enthroned Logos with cruciform halo, a scene of the Virgin and Child shows the Word made flesh. John's spiritual insight into this mystery is revealed below in letters of gold: *In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud D(eu)m et D(eu)s erat Verbum*. The adoration of the heavenly choirs and the Church throughout all ages (cf. Colossians 1:15–18) fills the margins of *both* pages so that Christ's humanity shares in the glory of his eternal divinity. The incarnate Christchild enthroned on Mary's lap within a mandorla is acclaimed by two seraphim who often appear in scenes of St John's apocalyptic vision of Christ's divine majesty; conversely, commentaries on the revelation of Christ as *alpha et omega, principium et finis* in Revelation 1:8, commonly cross-refer to the Incarnation by citing two phrases from John's gospel opening, *In principio erat Verbum* and *Verbum caro factum est*. Similarly, commentators using the opening of St John's gospel as a key to the spiritual interpretation of Psalm 109 also use [179] phrases such as *In utero Mariae semper virginis Verbum caro factum est* in

order to show that Christ's divinity was pre-existent but that the humanity of the same Logos was taken on at a specific moment in time.³⁶

This scriptural chain, which was clearly not confined to the exegesis of Psalm 109 and the Arian controversy, was thoroughly absorbed in the insular tradition where it appears in various contexts. Bede's homily on the Nativity, for example, instead of discussing the relatively earthbound accounts of Matthew and Luke is guided by the liturgical gospel reading for the feast and takes the form of a sustained exposition of St John's eagle-like ascent to Christ's divinity in the opening words of his gospel, *In principium erat Verbum [. . .] Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*. Bede uses John's gospel opening to refute heretics who say *si ergo natus est Christus, erat tempus quando ille non erat* and in this he follows Augustine's use of the same gospel text to refute the heresy of Arius.³⁷ During the period of the Benedictine reform, this exegesis received vernacular expression in Ælfric's homily on St John's Assumption. Like Bede and Alcuin, he perpetuated the tradition that John's gospel was written at the behest of the early bishops of the Church for the express purpose of refuting heretics who (long before Arius) claimed 'that Christ was not before he was born of Mary'. John was so filled with the Spirit of God that he excelled all God's angels and all creatures in his exalted mind and began the evangelical memorial with these words, 'In the beginning was the Word'. John made known, continues Ælfric, 'many things concerning Christ's divinity, how he eternally without beginning was begotten of the Father, and reigns with him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world ever without end'.³⁸ Heavily indebted to St Augustine's commentary on St John in his homily for the Vigil of the Ascension and in his frequent expositions on the Trinity, Ælfric constantly emphasises in this context Christ's timeless divinity, his taking on of humanity at a particular moment in time at the Incarnation, and the glorification of that humanity, to share the glory which his divinity had received throughout eternity.

The composite scene on fol. 75v of Ælfwine's New Minister prayer book showing the crowned Virgin holding the child and overshadowed by the dove and the two cross-nimbed Lords enthroned over Arius and Judas (Figure 13.12) would seem to enshrine this Johannine Christology, which is central to Trinitarian orthodoxy, rather than any 'narrowly defined theological position', and to be appropriately positioned, therefore, as an aid to meditation prefacing the offices and prayers of the Trinity. Psalm 109 was customarily regarded as referring to 'the exaltation of the humanity of Christ in the glory of the Father, which followed immediately on the Resurrection, and not the bodily Ascension which took place forty days after'.³⁹ The means by which Christ's humanity was thus exalted is clearly identified in Augustine's exegesis on Psalm 119 by cross-reference to the

36 Cassiodorus, *Expositio psalmorum LXXI–CL*, p. 1013.

37 Bede, *Opera homiletica*, ed. D. Hurst, *CCSL* cxxii (Turnhout, 1955), Homelia I, 8, p. 53.

38 Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, I, pp. 59–71, esp. p. 71; II, pp. 361–69, for homily on Vigil of the Ascension, esp. p. 365.

39 J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, 1956), p. 308.

hymn from Philippians 2:8–11, used in the liturgy of Holy Week, *factus est subditus usque ad mortem, mortem [180] autem crucis; propterea eum Deus exaltavit*.⁴⁰ Christ emptied himself of his glory (not his divinity) when he was made man (Philippians 2:6–7); it is this glory which he takes up again at his exaltation. Similarly, in Ælfwine's prayer book, the means by which Christ's humanity, received in historical time from Mary, was raised to the glory represented in fol. 75v is set out in the previous illustration on fol. 65v (Figure 13.11). It depicts the Crucifixion seen through the eyes and testimony of St John and is inscribed with a text from his gospel in which he explicitly interprets the Crucifixion as an exaltation. The picture is inserted between the text of St John's gospel account of the Crucifixion and the offices and prayers of the Cross which include the hymn from Philippians.

Christ's divinity is proclaimed through the iconographic conventions of showing him with arms horizontally extended and hands opened in voluntary, priestly gesture. He is enthroned on a cosmological Cross, alive and victorious over death, gazing at the Virgin from whom he took his humanity, and acclaimed by sun and moon and the *dextera Dei* on which St John's upturned gaze is fixed. The Evangelist's book is not inscribed but may well have called to mind his gospel opening. The related theological themes of fols. 65v and 75v received devotional expression in contemporary monastic life: for example, the second of the prayers before the Cross in the Good Friday *adoratio crucis* ceremony described in the *Regularis Concordia* invokes Christ as 'most glorious Creator of the world, splendour of the Father's glory, co-eternal with him and the Holy Ghost, who did deign to take flesh of a spotless Virgin and allow thy glorious hands to be fixed to the gibbet of the Cross [. . .]'.⁴¹

The text inscribed across the top of the drawing reads:

Hec crux consignet Ælfwinum corpore mente
In qua suspendens tra(hit) d(eu)s omnia secum.

The last phrase, '(this cross), hanging on which God draws all things to himself', is an echo of John 12:32, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself'. In St John's gospel the words are spoken by Christ to signify by what death he would die; in the drawing, though inscribed over the Crucifixion, the words are put in the third person and said of God, thereby emphasising Christ's divinity. In John 12:32, *Et ego si exaltatus a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum*, the word *exaltatus* is a pun, used elsewhere in St John's gospel to describe the Crucifixion. It means both a lifting up to glory and a lifting up to hang, to die. The artist has pictured the glory by showing Christ's divinity and majesty but he omits the word *exaltatus* from the inscription and substitutes the word *suspendens*, thereby

40 Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos CI-CL*, pp. 1607, 1620.

41 *Regularis Concordia*, p. 43.

presenting the stark concept of God hanging on the Cross. He thus presents St John's paradoxical interpretation of the Crucifixion through another paradox, a standard exegetical technique.⁴² Ælfwine's Crucifixion picture juxtaposes [181] an apparently irreconcilable inscription and visual image; Judith of Flanders's gospel frontispiece presents the same paradox through purely pictorial means.

Christ's humanity is more emotively demonstrated than in Ælfwine's drawing and his consequent mortality is made clear (Figure 13.9). The heavily slumped head and body, the arms sagging well below the horizontal bar of the rough-hewn Cross, graphically convey the idea of hanging. Yet other elements in the iconography – the cosmic *tau* Cross alluding to the *lignum vitae*, the veiled sun and moon – reveal this Crucifixion too, for those with eyes to see, as an exaltation in the sense of glorification that draws the faithful to their salvation. It is a liturgically inspired image. In the Good Friday *adoratio crucis*, the elevation of the cross before the congregation who are drawn to venerate it is accompanied by the antiphon, 'Behold the wood of the Cross, on which the world's salvation hung'.⁴³ The more diagrammatic drawing in Ælfwine's prayer book is an esoteric cue for meditation; it is not only a Christological statement but concerns the spiritual life. St John's text, to which the drawing's inscription refers, 'I, if I be lifted up [. . .] will draw all things to myself', is at the centre of a patristic chain of scriptural texts about God drawing the Church or the individual soul to himself. St Augustine and his inheritors noted that Christ said he would draw all things to himself and the *omnia* is preserved in the drawing's inscription. While it could be interpreted to mean the faithful of all ages, Augustine's primary interpretation of *omnia* is all parts that make up the creature – spirit, soul and body.⁴⁴ This is possibly reflected in the inscription's opening invocation that Ælfwine be signed with the cross *in corpore mente*.

Unlike the patron in Judith of Flanders's frontispiece, Ælfwine is not himself directly pictured being drawn to Christ raised up on the Cross, but he is present through being named in the inscribed prayer asking that he be signed with or blessed by the Cross. The drawing is inserted before a group of prayers and offices of the Cross which, the rubric says, are to be said before an image of the Cross, and the book later includes a prayer to the Trinity 'that the sign of the holy Cross be upon me, defend me from evil works, that the sign of the holy Cross be upon me night and day' (fol. 89). The unique image on fol. 65v is thus set in the context of a long devotional tradition also reflected in the *adoratio crucis* prayers of personal petition quoted by the *Regularis Concordia*: 'Hear me prostrate before

42 Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium*, *Tractatus* CXIX, p. 658, 'He who had created Mary became known in his power; but now, that which Mary had brought forth was hanging on the Cross' (*nunc vero quod Maria pepererat, pendebat in cruce*).

43 *Regularis Concordia*, p. 42.

44 Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium*, *Tractatus* LII, II, p. 450.

thy adorable and most glorious Cross that I may stand before thee',⁴⁵ and in a mid-tenth-century Anglo-Saxon copy of *De laudibus sanctae crucis* which includes a portrait of its author, Alcuin's pupil Hrabanus Maurus, kneeling at the foot of [182] the Cross, his whole body inscribed with his name and a prayer for his protection.⁴⁶

Such penitential prostration before the exalted Cross was not only a plea for protection. As the Carolingian liturgist Amalarius of Metz makes clear in his commentary on the Good Friday ceremonies, a work well known to the Anglo-Saxon monastic reformers, the veneration of the Cross was regarded as a ritual enactment of the individual's sharing in Christ's descent and humility on the Cross, by which alone his exaltation can be comprehended and shared; Amalarius alludes to the hymn from Philippians 2:8–11, at this point.⁴⁷ In the offices and prayers of the Cross following the Crucifixion scene in Ælfwine's little book, the Philippians hymn is directly coupled with the antiphon used in the Good Friday ceremonies acclaiming the exalted Cross 'on which the salvation of the world hung', fols. 67v–68. In the feasts for the Invention and Exaltation of the Cross, the Philippians hymn is paired with another complementary text, from John 12:32, 'I, if I be lifted up [. . .] will draw all things to myself'. The context of the passage in the gospel severely warns those of Christ's followers who, like the Jews, may remain blind to understanding that the Cross is a necessary part of the exaltation.⁴⁸ The liturgy, like Ælfwine's image of the cosmic Christ on fol. 65v, disposes the faithful to share in the ever-present Paschal mystery. Being drawn to God is the purpose of the contemplative life. Meditating on the inscribed text and image inspired by the written testimony of St John, the monk Ælfwine is drawn to see the Crucifixion through John's eyes. The consequent enthronement of Christ's exalted humanity is elaborated after the offices and prayers of the Cross in the image on fol. 75v prefacing the prayers of the Trinity – an image whose conceptual origins, it has been suggested above, also derive from the Christology of St John.

The four surviving pictures of St John writing at the Crucifixion have certain features in common: all depict Mary and John flanking a cosmological Cross, with Christ's relationship to Mary marked by glance or gesture and with St John gazing upwards, pen in hand. There are various stylistic, iconographic and textual links within the group and with certain other late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts

45 *Regularis Concordia*, p. 44. See B. Raw, 'Prayers and Devotions in the *Ancren Wisse*', *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins*, ed. B. Rowland (London, 1974), pp. 260–71, at 263–66, for Titus D. xxvii and the tradition of devotion to the Cross; L. Gjerlow, *Adoratio Crucis* (Oslo, 1961), pp. 13–28.

46 Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.16.3, fol. 30v. E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. no. 14; J. Higgin, 'Glastonbury, Dunstan, Monasticism and Manuscripts', *Art History*, ii (1979), pp. 275–90 at 278–79; illus., N. Ramsay and M. Sparks, *The Image of Saint Dunstan* (Canterbury, 1988), p. 11.

47 *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, II, *Liber officialis*, ed. J.M. Hanssens (Vatican, 1950), p. 100.

48 R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, I, pp. 456–88.

whose Crucifixion scenes do not include the St John writing motif. There are close iconographic parallels, for example, between Judith of Flanders's gospels and the Winchcombe Psalter (and between them and Arundel 60); the Ramsey Psalter shares a textual peculiarity with three other Winchester psalters including Arundel 60 and Tiberius C. vi, both of which, like Judith of Flanders's gospels, depict the rough-hewn cross.

There are also, however, considerable iconographic differences between the four representations of St John writing at the Crucifixion: in whether they show [183] Christ dead or alive and with or without the side wound, the inscribed *titulus* and hand of God, personifications of sun and moon, veiled or otherwise, the rough-hewn cross or *lignum vitae*, additional inscriptions or a patron figure. Mary is shown acclaiming or mourning Christ, with or without a book, within or outside the picture frame. Even the figure of St John varies: he is shown standing like an orator or adapted from a seated figure, in two examples stepping up on raised ground. There is variety in whether or not he is bearded, and whether he writes in scroll or codex, held in veiled hand or not; only two examples show what he has written and they quote different texts. The four extant examples of the motif were produced over a period of seventy years or so in different contexts as a psalter frontispiece (Figure 13.1), an illustration to the first division of the psalter (Figure 13.2), as a gospel frontispiece (Figure 13.9) and in a prayer book (Figure 13.11). In both the Winchcombe Psalter and Ælfwine's prayer book the Crucifixion drawing seems thematically related to another drawing in the same book, yet the programmes of the two books are distinct from one another.

The mid-twelfth-century Winchester Psalter, which preserves a number of Anglo-Saxon iconographic features, has the bearded figure of St John holding a stylus and a diptych in veiled hand, standing on flat ground in an extended Crucifixion scene including Stephaton and Longinus and the two thieves, and may reflect something of another pre-Conquest variant of the motif.⁴⁹ The Sherborne Chartulary, fol. 86v, a unique survival of a standing evangelist portrait in twelfth-century English manuscript art, shows St John bearded, identified by name and standing with raised pen (as in Ælfwine's prayer book, fol. 65v), yet holding with a declamatory gesture a scroll inscribed *In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat*, which may possibly suggest some sort of fusion between the iconographic types of John standing writing at the Crucifixion, recognising Christ's divinity, and the evangelist in an author portrait refuting Arius's denial of Christ's Godhead.⁵⁰ The figure (presumably St John) with book or tablet and pen standing with five other apostles in the frontispiece to an eleventh-century English homily collection (Figure 13.18) has affinities with the figure of John in the Crucifix-

49 BL, Cotton MS Nero C. iv, fol. 22; F. Wormald, *The Winchester Psalter* (London, 1973), pl. 25.

50 BL, Add. MS 46487. H. Swarzenski, *Monuments of Romanesque Art* (London, 1954), pl. 134, fig. 303; but see the Stavelot Bible (BL Add. MS 28107, fol. 161v), where St Luke similarly stands with pen and scroll before his gospel opening.



Figure 13.18 Anglo-Saxon Homilies. The Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. MS 198, fol. 1.

ion scene in the Winchcombe Psalter and Judith of Flanders's gospels and also suggests the experimental transfer of motifs from one context to another.⁵¹ In a twelfth-century continental ivory John stands writing at the Crucifixion but, unlike the Anglo-Saxon examples, both he and Mary are shown with downcast heads mourning the dead Christ and thereby present an emotive devotional image [184] rather than one resonant with allusions to St John's multiple roles and spiritual insight.⁵²

The considerable differences between the four extant Anglo-Saxon examples of St John writing at the Crucifixion suggest they were not simply derived from the

51 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 198, p. 1. E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon MSS*, cat. no. 88, notes the stylistic relationship to the Winchcombe Psalter. The bent *left* knee and the veiled hand are details shared with Judith of Flanders's gospel frontispiece, though the Cambridge figure stands on flat ground, like the other apostles shown.

52 Cover of New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 651. A. Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der romanischen Zeit* (Berlin, 1926), IV, p. 13, no. 21, pl. VI.

Ramsey Psalter or some lost pictorial model. The repeated scriptural references to St John's inspired written testimony, both in his gospel and in the Apocalypse, and the frequency of exegetical references to St John's multiple roles and inspired insight into Christ's identity which the iconographic motif conveys, argue that it need not have been dependent on some mysterious lost text either. The motif cannot be regarded as an idiosyncratic insular narrative embellishment, though the dramatic interest which it adds to an already popular devotional image of the Crucifixion and its concrete realisation of abstract concepts doubtless help explain its popularity in Anglo-Saxon culture. Viewed against other examples, both in earlier continental works and in the art of the Anglo-Saxon monastic reform, which also attempt with ingenuity and variety to depict standard Augustinian exegesis on St John, the surviving representations of the evangelist writing at the Crucifixion look like a series of creative experiments within an older iconographic tradition.

The visual image of St John, beloved disciple, evangelist and visionary of the Apocalypse, drawn heavenwards to gaze directly on the divine mysteries, communicating both what he has seen and what has been revealed to him, functions exactly like a key text in an exegetical chain and is linked, even within the apparently limiting context of evangelist portraits, to other texts and visual images to reveal related aspects of his spiritual insight. The transposition of the seated evangelist portrait to the context of the Crucifixion tableau extended its possible range of allusion. Chiefly, it enabled St John to be shown, as he is in the fourth gospel, as a model of the true disciple, a pattern of how to look on the Cross and be drawn to Christ. For the artists and patrons of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform the motif of St John writing at the Crucifixion could act both as a devotional image and an allusive aid to meditation as they practised the spiritual interpretation of Scripture and the contemplative life exemplified by St John.

THE ROUGH-HEWN CROSS IN ANGLO-SAXON ART

From early Christian times the Cross was identified with the risen and glorified body of Christ, most typically by representing the Cross itself as a glorious jewelled object or by revealing it as the Tree of Life (Raw 1970). Both conventions were continued in works showing Christ dead on the Cross. A group of late Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion scenes apparently departs from a long tradition by depicting the Cross made of roughly hewn tree-trunks (Plate 12.1, Figure 14.1, Figure 14.2, Figure 14.3). This distinctive iconographic type occurs in Judith of Flanders's gospel book (Pierpont Morgan MS 709, fol. 1v), in two psalters (BL Cotton Tiberius C.VI, fol. 13 and Arundel 60, fol. 12v), on the engraved silver mount of the portable altar in the Musée de Cluny, Paris, and, some would add, in the liturgical book known as the Red Book of Darley (Camb. C.C.C. MS 422, p. 53; Temple 1976, 121; Gneuss 1985, 101, 111). The usual dating of all four miniatures within the period c. 1050–64, the probable Winchester origins of three of them and the late Winchester analogues for the figural style of the altar engravings, may naturally suggest that the hewn Cross made a sudden appearance in Anglo-Saxon art in Winchester on the eve of the Conquest. The motif has been interpreted as the Tree of Life in the form of the palm tree of exegesis, its rough trunk sections rendered as stylised knots and stumps by northern artists; alternatively, it has been seen as constructed of wood derived from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in Eden (Hildburgh 1932). Some of these assumptions may be questioned.

The hewn Cross in Judith of Flanders's Gospels finds a visual similarity in the lopped trunk of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in Ælfric's paraphrase of the Hexateuch, illustrated at Canterbury in the second quarter of the eleventh century (Cotton Claudius B.IV, fol. 6; Dodwell and Clemoes 1974). But the Hexateuch artist did not consistently use the lopped trunk to designate the *lignum scientiae* while he did use it elsewhere to show the creation of plants, the Tree of Life and the unrelated story of Hagar, fol. 36. A tree with a similarly lopped trunk grows even further from Eden in the David cycle of Tiberius C.VI, fol. 8 (Wormald 1962). Later, it appears in the secular context of the Bayeux Tapestry. In short, a lopped trunk was quite a conventional feature of *living* trees in late Anglo-Saxon art. The pictorial origins may well be antique, via calendar pictures or a Carolingian Genesis cycle; living trees with lopped trunks punctuate



Figure 14.1 The Tiberius Psalter. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Tiberius C.VI, fol. 13.

the landscape of the Utrecht Psalter which was in England by c. 1000 and copied at Canterbury soon after.

The Crucifixion scene in the Red Book of Darley employs this convention. It shows Christ alive on a tree with a lopped but sprouting green trunk. Buds grow outwards from the centre along each of the two branches stemming obliquely from the trunk (Parker McLachlan 1978, fig. 3). It is a variant within the tradition in sacramentary and missal illustration where the initial letter 'T' opening the canon of the mass was represented as a *tau* cross, often foliated as the Tree of Life. The lopped trunk and budding branches of the *arbor crucis* in the Red Book of Darley and the accompanying *Dextera Dei* and the Dove all find iconographic parallels in the bronze pectoral cross in the Victoria and Albert Museum which Hildburgh (1932) identified as the Tree of Life with the Trinity and believed to be a unique formulation. The image is significantly different from that in the four examples of the Crucifixion in Plate 12.1, Figure 14.1, Figure 14.2 and Figure 14.3. They all show Christ dead on a Cross which, despite its ambiguous suggestions of a dead tree, or even of a lopped but living tree, is constructed of timber with stumps pointing along a single transverse beam.



Figure 14.2 Judith of Flanders' gospel book. The Morgan Library & Museum. MS M.709, fol. 1v. Purchased by J.P. Morgan (1867–1943) in 1926.

Having distinguished the Red Book of Darley's Tree of Life from the iconographic type of the hewn Cross seen in Plate 12.1, Figure 14.1, Figure 14.2 and Figure 14.3, another candidate for inclusion in the group may be considered. Although many features of late Anglo-Saxon iconography have been traced to the Utrecht Psalter, it does not depict the hewn Cross. The fullest of its three extant English copies, however, the Eadwine Psalter (c. 1147), shows a thin cross with irregular projections up the shaft and pointing outwards along each of the two arms (Camb. Trinity Coll. R.17.1, fol. 36v; James 1935). Other independent details in the Eadwine Psalter also suggest some intermediary between it and the Utrecht manuscript. In contrast, the first section of BL Harley 603 is a close copy of the Utrecht Psalter's illustrations (Backhouse 1984). Surprisingly, the cross in Harley 603 fol. 12 shows neither the plain cross of Utrecht fol. 12 nor the type in the Eadwine Psalter, but a cross made of two lopped tree-trunks with stumps pointing in the same direction along the single transverse beam (Figure 14.4).

The recognition of the hewn timber Cross in this Canterbury work of c. 1000–20 pushes back the traditional date for the appearance of the motif in Anglo-Saxon art. Its appearance in Canterbury well before the familiar Winchester examples raises



Figure 14.3 Arundel 60 Psalter. © The British Library Board. MS Arundel 60, fol. 12v.



Figure 14.4 The Harley 603 Psalter, Psalm 21. © The British Library Board. MS Harley 603, fol. 12.

again the question of why the miniature of the hewn Cross in Judith of Flanders's Gospels, which may also have Canterbury origins, is often dated to c. 1051–64 when the rest of the manuscript is generally assigned earlier, to the second quarter of the eleventh century (Temple 1976, 109; Needham 1979, 38). The later dating of the prefatory miniature, conjoint with the rest of the book and in the same style, stems partly from the mid-century date for the hewn Cross iconography hitherto argued by its appearance in BL Arundel 60 and Tiberius C.VI and partly from the desire to identify the woman at the foot of the Cross with Judith herself, who only acquired the manuscript on or after her marriage to Tostig Godwinson c. 1051.

The hewn Cross in Harley 603 may help in understanding the associations suggested for contemporaries by the iconographic type. It illustrates the prophecy of the Passion in Psalm 21 not by the Crucifixion but by the Cross with the lance, sponge and wreath. Commenting on the version in the Utrecht Psalter, Schiller (1972, 185) identified the motif as a ninth-century invention connected with the new interest in Christ's suffering. However, the Instruments of the Passion appear as the insignia of the risen and triumphant Christ in the 'Aethelstan Psalter' fol. 2v and the Benedictional of St Aethelwold, fol. 9v (Temple 1976, pl. 32; Wormald 1962, pl. 3). Also, in Harley 603 they are not arrayed as emotive symbols of Christ's suffering but as a trophy, reminiscent of the symbolic representations of the Crucifixion in sixth-century ampullae which show the Cross as the *lignum vitae* triumphant over the empty Sepulchre (Monza, 9–11), and particularly ampullae 5 and 6 at Bobbio, where lance and spear are held up to the *lignum vitae* as though to the body of Christ (Grabar 1958, pls. 36–39). There has been discussion as to whether the Monza and Bobbio ampullae depict a living tree [153] (Hildburgh 1931) or a cross constructed of palm wood (Grabar 1958), but the motif is ultimately derived from that of the imperial *tropaeum* which could be shown by a living palm tree (as in the Walters Art Gallery third-century sarcophagus; Brenk 1980, fig. 7) or even, as at Carpentras, by a rough tree-trunk.

Harley 603 is not the earliest representation of a timber Cross. Archaic elements in Tiberius C.VI, fol. 13, including an *ansata* form of title board, may hint at the older origins of the timber cross itself. One of a group of late Breton gospel books preserving Carolingian and archaic features depicts the knots and grain of the wooden Cross, though without a jagged outline (Bodley MS Laud lat. 26, fol. 9v; Alexander 1977) and a Carolingian ivory from Metz c. 840–50 shows the two thieves crucified on tree stumps and Christ dead on a timber Cross (Swarzenski 1954, fig. 40). The earliest extant representation of the roughly hewn Cross (victorious over the Sepulchre and attended by antique symbols of cosmic sovereignty) is the ivory on Henry II's Book of Pericopes, often dated to c. 870, but probably earlier, closer to the Utrecht Psalter and the group of Metz ivories associated with Early Christian ivories (Lasko 1972, 36–37, pl. 29).

The hewn Cross on the Pericopes ivory and in Arundel 60 and Judith of Flanders' Gospels have all been explained in terms of the combined legends of the Vision of Seth and the History of the True Cross whereby the Cross, though mystically prefigured by the Tree of Life in Eden, was constructed of wood grown

from seeds or shoots taken from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and planted on the grave of Adam. The Tree of Death, the *lignum scientiae*, therefore became the Tree of Life in bearing Christ as its fruit at the Crucifixion when its barren timbers briefly burst into leaf and then died again (Hildburgh 1932, 90–97). The twelfth-century date of the earliest combination of the originally separate legends of Seth and the True Cross (Quinn 1962, 88–101) and the fourteenth-century appearance of the flowering Rood in *Cursor Mundi* need not be insurmountable obstacles to this theory. But the apocryphal stories so popular in later medieval literature, where they merged with the Legend of the Green Tree and the Dry Tree (Ladner 1961), do not satisfactorily explain the earliest medieval pictorial image.

On the complex Pericopes ivory the only feature which might conceivably justify the linking of the hewn Cross with the apocryphal story of its material origins in Eden is the serpent coiled around its base. This is a standard item of Carolingian Crucifixion iconography, explicable in terms of the antithetical and typological relations between the Cross and the *lignum scientiae* and the *lignum vitae* familiar through exegesis, liturgy and hymns. The serpent also encircles a hewn timber Cross in a tenth-century miniature from Corvey (Schiller 1972, fig. 383) and on the cover, probably of continental origin, on another of Judith of Flanders's Anglo-Saxon gospel books, Pierpont Morgan MS 708 (Dodwell 1982, 311). The serpent rarely appears, however, in Anglo-Saxon drawings of the Crucifixion and in none of the examples of the hewn Cross. Furthermore, the earliest English versions of the Legend of the True Cross do not stipulate that the Cross had roughly hacked stumps but that it was carpentered (Napier 1894, 25; Morris 1971, 79). The lopped Cross does not appear in the few tenth- and early eleventh-century continental Crucifixion scenes which show the Fall enacted around the base of the Cross, or the skull or body of Adam buried below it. The earliest English work combining the lopped Cross and Adam is the Bury St Edmunds ivory cross of the second quarter of the twelfth century, where the presence of Adam is explicable in terms other than the apocryphal story (Lasko 1972, pl. 177).

The appearance of the hewn Cross in the four Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion scenes in Plate 12.1, Figure 14.1, Figure 14.2 and Figure 14.3 may now be examined more closely. Three of the examples show the Cross as *tau*-shaped. The *tau*, sign of the just in Ezekiel 9:4, was identified with the eschatological sign of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:30) and with the sign of deliverance written with the blood of the Passover lamb in the account of Exodus read during the Good Friday liturgy before St John's account of the Passion. Several early medieval crosses bear enigmatic but self-revealing inscriptions; the *tau* cross is composed of a single potent letter or sign of the Logos, a sign hallowed by use in the sacrificial context of sacramentary illustrations. In the Tiberius Psalter (Figure 14.1), the *tau* spans the entire page, its allusion to the *nomen sacrum* extended by the title board. Alone of Anglo-Saxon drawings of the Crucifixion it preserves the Johannine scene of the piercing of Christ's side and, alone of the four examples of the hewn Cross, it shows Christ's five wounds bleeding. Though dead, however, he is almost upright with a fillet encircling his brow.

The four Beasts who surround the divine throne in perpetual adoration in Revelation 4:6–9, and often attend the exalted *Agnus Dei* on the reverse of crosses, could also attend Christ at the Crucifixion. Their presence on the golden cross of an Anglo-Saxon reliquary crucifix of c. 1000 thus alludes to Christ's glorified body even while the ivory corpus depicts him as dead (Backhouse *et al.* 1984, no. 118). The Beasts similarly attest to the identity of the crucified Christ and the *Agnus Dei* by simultaneously attending both on the portable altar in the Musée de Cluny (Plate 12.1). Christ's body conforms to the *tau* cross, his sunken head and arms aligned against the transverse beam formed of a lopped tree-trunk. In the side mounts, the Virgin and St John join archangels in acclaiming this [154] image of the Crucified in which they recognise the exalted body of the Redeemer, visualised in the lower mount as the eucharistic and apocalyptic Lamb (Okasha and O'Reilly 1984).

Judith of Flanders's gospel book (Figure 14.2) shows the innovative tender gesture of Mary holding her robe to the side of Christ whose slumped body anticipates Gothic images of his suffering. But his wounds are not otherwise emphasised and Mary and John are not in attitudes of extreme grief. Mary is shown, unusually, with a book and John is recording his testimony: they are witnesses of a cosmic event. The symbols of sun and moon reveal this as a timeless image, the stark timbers of the *tau* Cross spanning the distance between heaven and earth and, ladder-like, forming the continuing means of God's descent to man and man's ascent to God. Of the four examples of the hewn Cross, this most effectively suggests the identity of the outstretched limbs of the Logos with the cosmological dimensions of the Cross.

The highly formalised version of the image facing Psalm 1 in BL Arundel 60 (Figure 14.3) also shows the Cross as the axis of the universe, constructed of rough timber yet painted green and rising from the centre of the earth like a tree. Christ is shown dead but upright, his palms extended in a priestly gesture, the nail prints briefly indicated, the side wound not at all, his head adorned with a fillet. Again, Mary and John with books are shown in attitudes of acclamation. This is a hieratic image, refuting anachronistic attempts to explain early medieval versions of the hewn Cross motif as a means of representing Christ's suffering humanity more realistically.

The considerable differences of context and detail in these four examples, even the variety of ways in which the lopped Cross is depicted, suggest they do not stem from a single model, just as no single apocryphal text explains [155] their meaning. They all show the dead Christ on a timber cross yet use symbols normally associated with the exalted Cross and the cosmological Tree of Life. The paradox of the image is central to the mystery of the Cross, most dramatically expounded in the liturgy of Good Friday and the ceremony of *Adoratio Crucis*, described in the customary of the English Benedictine reform of which these manuscripts are the late product. The *Regularis Concordia* prescribes that a veiled cross be held up before the altar. Christ's reproaches to his people for failing to recognise his divinity at his Passion and for lifting him up on the gibbet of the Cross are ironically interspersed

with the triple Eastern Sanctus. The ceremonial cross is exalted, unveiled and venerated. The Cross, and specifically the wood of the Cross, is adored in the antiphons: *Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit; ecce enim propter lignum venit gaudium in universo mundo* (Symons 1953, 42). Fortunatus's hymns, *Pange lingua* and *Vexilla regis*, not only refer to the Cross as a tree and rehearse its relationship with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life but also show it as an object, a gallows, and extol its wood as a *tropaeum*, the planned instrument of redemption on which the incarnate Lord of creation outwitted the Tempter. The antiphons, hymns and ceremony of the *Adoratio Crucis* were repeated on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

While elucidating the theology of the image as no apocryphal story can, these liturgical texts were not, of course, peculiar to England and the themes of the *lignum crucis* could be rendered in Crucifixion scenes without depicting a rough-hewn Cross. This is precisely what is done in the eclectic Winchcombe Psalter (Camb. Univ. Lib. MS Ff.1.23, fol. 88; Nichols 1983, fig. 30), though in many other details, including iconographically unusual ones, it has striking parallels with the Crucifixion scenes in the Arundel Psalter and the Gospels of Judith of Flanders. In all three miniatures the cosmological Cross is flanked by acclaiming witnesses, with the *Dextera Dei* and roundel busts of sun and moon above. In both the Arundel and Winchcombe Psalters Mary and John and Sol and Luna are named, there is no title board on the upper shaft of the Cross, Christ wears a fillet, his hands are open, his body up right, his feet nailed to a suppedeneum. In both Judith's Gospel miniature and the Winchcombe Psalter sun and moon veil their faces, Christ's head slumps on his right shoulder and John writes his testimony as in BL Harley 2904, fol. 3v (Temple 1976, pl. 142) (Figure 13.1).

The Cross in the Winchcombe Psalter of c. 1030–50 is smooth, though the irregularly cut ends suggest it is of wood, and it is inscribed *lignum vit(a)e*. The Arundel Psalter and Judith of Flanders's Gospels show the same programme as the Winchcombe Psalter but add immeasurably to its allusiveness by exploiting graphically the ambiguity of the very term *lignum*. In its depiction of the Cross as a gallows constructed of rough timber which can also suggest both a stricken tree and a pruned, fruit-bearing tree uniting heaven and earth, the *lignum vitae* in Judith's miniature conveys with metaphysical wit the divine plan of salvation and the relationship of the redeeming Cross with the Tree of Death (the *lignum scientiae*) and the paradisal and eschatological Tree of Life.

The question of the origins of the hewn Cross image may now be rephrased. If a Christological programme reflecting themes of the Good Friday liturgy could be evoked through a Crucifixion scene with a conventionally shaped cross for the *lignum vitae*, are there any clues to explain how it came to be visualised in terms of the rough-hewn Cross whose first extant appearance in Anglo-Saxon art, in Harley 603 (Figure 14.4), was not in a Crucifixion scene at all, but in the guise of a tree-trunk *tropaeum* illustrating the Good Friday Psalm 21?

Like another Constantine, Oswald of Northumbria fought under the standard of the Cross. Bede's description of Oswald's cross is quite distinctive, however.

It was of wood and hurriedly made, the king himself holding it in position as it was hastily planted in the ground. His army knelt before it to pray for protection before going off to defeat a numerous foe. Healing splinters from this presumably uncarpentered *tropaeum* were sought in Bede's day and the spot became the centre of an annual pilgrimage and liturgical commemoration and the site of a church (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, III, 2). Wooden replicas of Oswald's cross may well have been made. Bede's story was well known and the cult of Oswald widespread in the tenth and eleventh centuries (Clemoes 1983). Judith of Flanders, wife of the earl of Northumbria, patronised Oswald's shrine and the collection of pious objects she took with her into exile in 1064 included relics of Oswald as well as her gospel books. The relevance of Bede's account to the present discussion is that it gives a famous historical example of divine protection being invoked through a wooden cross which carried the connotations of a royal standard and continued to be powerful after the victory. It was quoted by Alcuin's pupil Amalarius of Metz in his liturgical commentary, well known in Anglo-Saxon reformed monastic circles and copied in Canterbury, c. 975 (Temple 1976, 48). Furthermore, Amalarius' quotation is set in the context of his commentary on the *Adoratio* [156] *Crucis* ceremony on Good Friday. He cites Oswald's cross as a demonstration of the continuing saving power of the *lignum crucis* by which the devil is outwitted and the souls of the just led into paradise (Hanssens 1948, 103–104).

The hewn cross incorporated into the Crucifixion scenes in Plate 12.1, Figure 14.1, Figure 14.2 and Figure 14.3 has the aspect of a revered royal standard. It proclaims, like the *Vexilla regis, Regnavit a ligno Deus*. But the version in Judith of Flanders's Gospels is given an immediacy and an individual, spiritual application as well. Amalarius had cited Jerome's injunction to adore the wood of the Cross, like the pious lady Paula who often sought its protection and prostrated herself before it in penitence (Hanssens 1948, 101). Quoting from the liturgy for Good Friday and the Exaltation, Amalarius shows that such prostration is in response to Christ's own example: 'He humbled himself unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God hath exalted him' (Philippians 2:8–9). Hrabanus Maurus's *De laudibus sanctae crucis*, copied in tenth-century England (Temple 1976, pl. 46), provides one of the Carolingian precedents for a figure shown praying before a cross, but none is shown so emotively as the woman in Judith's miniature, embracing the hewn Cross as the Beloved, clinging to it as the convoy to heaven. Meyer Shapiro has aptly said of Anglo-Saxon culture that already by the tenth century 'it shows a religious imagination disposed towards the concrete and tangible, elaborating the reports of sacred moments with a material fullness that anticipates the end of the Middle Ages with its demand for participation, re-enactment and visibility' (1979, 277). There are other hints of the process by which the *lignum crucis* in the traditional tableau of the Crucifixion with attendant figures came to be visualised in the Anglo-Saxon imagination not only as the Tree of Life but as an object made from a non-paradisal tree. In the rhetorical tradition of prosopopoeia, the Cross is presented as a wooden artefact in several literary examples (Schlauch 1940; Kaske 1967, 49). Similarly, pictorial representations

showing the Cross speaking through texts and images inscribed on it present it as an artefact. But they can also simultaneously reveal it to be the *arbor vitae*, the Ruthwell Cross through the inhabited vine on its narrow shaft, the Bury St Edmunds ivory cross by the lopped tree-trunks carved on the face. Literary works which exploit the concept of the Cross as the Tree of Life can also take up the other meaning of *lignum* as wood to show that the Cross derived its fabric from a tree. The Rood is described as 'the fairest of trees/that ever earthdwellers had known on earth' in the account of the finding of the True Cross in *Elene* (Kennedy 1963, 211); in his homily on the feast commemorating that discovery, Ælfric says, 'The Rood is a memorial of his Passion, holy through him though it grew in a wood' (Thorpe 1846, 307).

Much of the effect of the rough-hewn Cross motif depends on its implied contrast with the familiar image of the exalted True Cross clothed in precious metal, recalled in the commemorative cross at Golgotha described by Adomnán, and evoked in Anglo-Saxon art and literature such as the Brussels Cross reliquary (Backhouse *et al.* 1984, no. 75) and the *Dream of the Rood*, lines 76–77, and *Elene*, lines 1020–25, in the late tenth-century Vercelli Book anthology. Representations of the hewn Cross may partly reflect notions of what the exposed True Cross was like: it is shown as a lopped timber *tau* in a rare depiction of Heraclius and the Exaltation in a late eleventh-century copy of Hrabanus Maurus' homily for the feast (Alexander 1970, pl. 45c). Adomnán of Iona had reported the pilgrim Arculf's eye-witness account that the relics of 'the gibbet of honour' included a single transverse beam and that the knots (*nodis*) of the exposed *lignum crucis* exuded a healing liquid 'somewhat like oil' (Meehan 1958, 110). The Palestinian ampullae showing the Cross as an exalted tree/tropaeum, including those with the lance and sponge held up against the tree as if to the crucified body of Christ, are inscribed 'Oil of the Tree of Life from the Holy Places of Christ', their contents probably obtained by trickling oil over a reliquary of the True Cross. The relic of the lance which pierced Christ's side was preserved, actually inserted in a wooden cross (Meehan 1958, 51). Such images may illumine line 20 of the *Dream of the Rood* (Swanton 1970) where the visionary symbol variously described as a precious metalwork object and a tree (and only later as the blood-drenched hewn timber Cross) itself enigmatically 'sweats' on the right side. This textual detail (explored by Ó Carragáin (1983) as a liturgical reminiscence of the sacramental effusion from Christ's right side) is not incorporated in the pictorial images on Plate 12.1, Figure 14.1, Figure 14.2 and Figure 14.3 which have at once to show a hewn artefact, the exalted Tree and the Cross bearing Christ; but in methods appropriate to their medium, both poet and artists use ambivalent arboreal imagery to reveal the identification of the Cross and the body of Christ.

In the *Dream of the Rood*, changing perceptions of the significance of the Cross are revealed in the vision of its changing appearances. It is a golden, bejewelled standard or beacon, it is the paradisaical Tree of Life in Eden and at the end of time, but it is also a gallows, formed of common timber hacked down by men, clearly not in Eden. The cutting and carrying of the rough timber up to Golgotha

is as vigorously visualised as the calendar illustrations of tree-felling, lopping and haulage of lopped tree-trunks in BL Junius A.VI, fol. 5 (Temple 1976, pl. 199). The Creator of the cosmos is hung on a manmade object. After the Crucifixion, the wood of the Cross is felled for the second time, buried, like Christ, and then raised up. At the end of the Good Friday *Adoratio Crucis* in the *Regularis Concordia* there is provision for an additional participation in and re-enactment of the sacred drama. The ceremonial cross was 'buried' on or near the altar, to be raised up on Easter Sunday (Symons 1953, 44; Young 1920). Significantly, the lopped Cross motif was often used when the subject of the Deposition came to be represented in art. The atmosphere of a solemn liturgical rite pervades the scene in the St Albans Psalter of c. 1120–30, where Christ's body is taken down from the lopped timber Cross and held up against it to be mourned and adored by men and angels (Pächt *et al.* 1960, pl. 29).

The poet can present a series of images, the artist only one. But by inscribing the cosmic dimensions of the redemptive Tree of Life in the form of a rough artefact which looks like a Tree of Death, the image of the hewn *tau* Cross similarly presents riddling ambiguities and the possibility of a series of apprehensions. The Cross is identified with the Logos-Creator; its physical appearance makes a Christological statement and offers a dramatic manifestation of death overcome by death. Recognising the identity of the crucified and exalted body of Christ, his inseparable human and divine natures, the dreamer in the *Dream of the Rood*, like the woman clinging to the hewn Cross in Judith of Flanders's miniature, or the person meditating on such an image, acknowledges the salvific power of the wood of the Cross and sees it as the continuing means to Paradise, both spiritually and eschatologically, for the individual as well as in the vast plan of redemption.

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TEXT AND IMAGE IN THE ANGLO-SAXON BENEDICTINE REFORM

The earliest surviving Latin Bible, the Codex Amiatinus, is a monumental copy of Jerome's Vulgate, written in Roman uncial script and prefaced by images which evoke the art of the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity. It was long believed to be a sixth-century Roman manuscript, but was produced in the Anglo-Saxon monastery of St Peter and St Paul at Wearmouth-Jarrow in Northumbria during the abbacy of Ceolfrith (688–716). The *Romanitas* of the Codex Amiatinus demonstrates the quality of the monastery's scriptorium and library within the first generation of its foundation by Benedict Biscop, who brought back many manuscripts and images from his pilgrimages through Gaul to Rome. His successor Ceolfrith took the codex on his own final pilgrimage to Rome in 716 to offer it as a gift from 'the ends of the earth' at the shrine of St Peter.

The book's famous frontispiece shows a haloed scribe in the pose of a Late Antique evangelist portrait, yet seated before an open bookcase or *armarium* containing all the books of the Bible, bound in nine separate volumes (Plate 1.1). Moreover, he is wearing the head-dress and breastplate of a Jewish high priest, and above him an inscription refers to the Old Testament priestly scribe Ezra. The biblical commentary of Ceolfrith's spiritual son Bede (d. 735) casts light on the possible meaning of the enigmatic picture. Bede explained that Ezra, the inspired restorer and editor of the Hebrew Scriptures salvaged after the Babylonian Captivity, also renewed the Scriptures by interpreting the spiritual meaning of the literal text. He presents Ezra as a prophetic figure of all orthodox teachers who share in Christ's priestly work of showing how the gospel fulfils the Law. Several inscribed diagrams in the manuscript's opening quire depict the divine inspiration and authority of all the biblical books and their hallowed translations, and the harmony of the Old Testament and the New in revealing Christ.

The scribal picture thus forms a fitting opening for the Codex Amiatinus, which itself contains not only the Old Testament, restored by Ezra and translated from Hebrew into Latin by Jerome, but also the New Testament; the manuscript is a *bibliotheca* or complete library of the Scriptures bound within a single volume, a format then extremely rare. For Origen, Jerome and other Fathers the *armarium* of the Scriptures was a metaphor of the faithful reader who has interiorised the divine word and become a library of Christ. Similarly, the ritual vestments worn by the

Jewish high priest on entering the sanctuary were in patristic tradition given a spiritual interpretation. The venerable scribe at the opening of the Codex Amiatinus may, therefore, be seen not simply as Ezra, Jerome or any other historical figure concerned with the important task of the scholarly editing and copying of the literal text of Scripture, but as an image of the Christian scholar and teacher prefigured by Ezra, spiritually cleansed and vested with purity of heart in preparation for entering the sacred sanctuary of Scripture to discern and practise God's word.

Roman, Frankish and Irish traditions were important in the formation of the varied types of early Anglo-Saxon monasticism. Like other monasteries in the pre-Carolingian period of the *regula mixta*, Wearmouth-Jarrow cannot be described as fully Benedictine, but there are many indications it was influenced by the Rule. Its founder took the name of Benedict and cited the Rule of 'the great St Benedict, our founder' when urging his own community always to elect as abbot one from within the community who had proved himself worthy by probity of life and wisdom of teaching. The centrality of Scripture and the importance of sacred learning to the monastic life are deeply marked in the contemporary accounts of the monastery. The work of Bede was influential for Carolingian commentators and was to be recalled in the literature of the Anglo-Saxon monastic reform of the later tenth and early eleventh centuries, when the Rule of St Benedict was at last widely established in the southern part of the English kingdom, newly united after the Viking invasions.

Manuscripts from the reform period vividly illustrate aspects of the well-known process of transformation which Benedictine monasticism underwent as it was assimilated into aristocratic medieval society, received lay endowments and royal patronage and provided the basis for episcopal organisation within the English church. The liturgical aspect of monastic life was elaborated and some monasteries became centres of learning and of liturgical art which, though broadly formed by the art of the Carolingian Renaissance, had some continuity with earlier Insular tradition and developed very distinctive characteristics in the century before the Norman Conquest.

The New Minster charter, composed by Aethelwold, the monastic bishop of the premier see of Winchester, records and celebrates the introduction of Benedictine monks to the New Minster there in 964. The charter takes the unusual form of a small but sumptuous book, written in letters of gold. It describes King Edgar's expulsion of secular clerks because, he said, 'their prayers could profit me nothing', and also his replacement of them by 'monks pleasing to God' who would pray for him without ceasing. The account of the king's role in implementing a unifying programme of reform and renewal is prefaced by an ornately framed picture (Figure 15.1). Watched over by the Virgin and St Peter, the heavenly patrons of Winchester, King Edgar genuflects and offers the New Minster charter to Christ, whose blessing authenticates the royal gift and gives divine sanction to the monastic reform.

The role of King Edgar (959–75) as pastor of his people in establishing houses of Benedictine monks and nuns in the kingdom and sanctioning monastic bishoprics



Figure 15.1 New Minster Charter. Winchester, c. 964. Frontispiece of King Edgar offering the Charter to Christ. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Vespasian A. VIII, fol. 2v.

is described in the foreword to the *Regularis Concordia*. The text bound the houses of the reform together in greater unity by a common code of monastic usage which blended native and continental liturgical and other practices. Recalling the earlier Carolingian reform associated with the Emperor Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane, it was drawn up by royal command following a synodal council at Winchester, c. 973, and in consultation with monastic advisers from Fleury and Ghent. An eleventh-century copy of the *Regularis Concordia* has a prefatory drawing of King Edgar with Bishop Aethelwold and Dunstan, the monastic archbishop of Canterbury who, like Aethelwold, had founded or reformed numerous monasteries (Figure 15.2). The three figures are enthroned together and united by the same scroll, demonstrating their close accord as co-leaders of the reform. The monk below, with a scroll held like a belt or girdle, binds himself to the Rule and its customs.

The Benedictional of St Aethelwold, c. 973, is a lavishly illuminated book of episcopal blessings arranged according to the feasts of the liturgical year. It was produced for Aethelwold's own use and its iconography reflects the ideology of the reform movement. The illumination for the Feast of St Benedict on 21 March, as first recorded in Bede's martyrology, is the earliest Anglo-Saxon portrait of the saint (Figure 15.3). He is labelled as 'abbot' and holds a codex, indicating the teaching authority of his Rule, and also a crown, suggesting the crown of life awaiting those who follow his Rule. He is majestically enthroned in heaven and wears a golden diadem. Robert Deshman noted that elsewhere in the manuscript the diadem is a royal attribute belonging to Christ, the heavenly archetype of the abbot, and that Abbot Benedict has here become one with Christ as ruler and judge.

The biblical architectural metaphor of the living *ecclesia* (Ephesians 2:19–22 and I Peter 2:4–10), which had been magisterially expounded by Bede and often used by Carolingian monastic writers, is a recurring image in the Benedictional. The opening pages depict the choirs of saints and apostles in the New Jerusalem (Figure 15.4). Their crowns merge with the capitals of the colonnades and they are presented as living columns of the heavenly temple, as once they had been pillars of the Church on earth (Galatians 2:9; Revelation 3:12). The central pillar on the first page is St Benedict, anachronistically shown in pontifical vestments and with a pallium. He is flanked by two more monastic bishops, Pope Gregory the Great, who was revered as the apostle to the Anglo-Saxons and author of the *Life of Benedict*, and St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne (d. 687) from the golden age described by Bede, when monasticism and monastic bishoprics were first established in the various Anglo-Saxon regional kingdoms. St Benedict and the heroic Anglo-Saxon past are presented as heavenly models for the tenth-century reform in the southern parts of the new English monarchy. The wider establishment of Benedictine monasticism in the north of England, after the Norman Conquest, also appropriated the popular cult of St Cuthbert, as shown in a splendidly illustrated copy of Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* produced at Durham in the twelfth century, in which the early Anglo-Saxon saint is shown as a Benedictine monk (London, British Library, MS Yates Thompson 26, fol. 39).



Figure 15.2 King Edgar, with Dunstan and Aethelwold, priests of the English Benedictine reform of the tenth century. *Regularis Concordia* of c. 973, in a copy from the eleventh century. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Tiberius A. III, fol. 2v.



Figure 15.3 Illustration for the festival of St Benedict, Benedictional of Aethelwold, Winchester, c. 973. © The British Library Board. MS Add. 49598, fol. 99v.



Figure 15.4 St Benedict, St Gregory the Great and St Cuthbert as living columns in the heavenly temple of the New Jerusalem. Benedictional of Aethelwold, Winchester, c. 973. © The British Library Board. MS Add. 49598, fol. 1r.

Several manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon reform offer visual meditations on the Rule of St Benedict, including one from Glastonbury, which had received the Rule c. 940. St Dunstan, who was abbot of Glastonbury, was an artist and may have been responsible for the mid-tenth-century drawing of Christ and a monk, and not just for adding the lower inscription (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 4. 32, fol. 1). The image is partly adapted from a Carolingian depiction of the monk Hrabanus Maurus kneeling before the Cross, with Dunstan's own name replacing that of Hrabanus in the prayer written above the small kneeling figure. Words from Psalm 44:7 are inscribed along Christ's rod, *uirga recta est uirga regni tui*: 'straight is the rod, the rod of thy kingship'. Augustine's commentary on the Psalm explains that the unbending rod is an attribute of Christ's righteousness and justice: with it he rules those who are spiritual, but breaks those who are carnal. Those who wish to be ruled by Christ should not wait for his judgement but should humbly confess, 'I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me', and should beseech Christ's mercy now in the words of the penitential Psalm: 'Hide thy face from my sins' (Psalm 50:5,11).

The prayer is movingly answered. In the picture Christ turns his face from the penitent's sins but does not abandon him. His right hand which holds the rod also points to the inscription on the book held in his left hand: *Uenite filii audite me timor e(t) dni docebo uos*: 'Come, my sons, listen to me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord' (Psalm 33:11). These consolatory words of Scripture are quoted in the invitation to the religious life in the Prologue of the Rule of St Benedict. In monastic literature the task of learning 'the fear of the Lord' refers not just to the novitiate but to the life-long task of learning the whole alphabet of spiritual wisdom, ranging from carnal to filial fear or 'the perfect love of God which casts out [carnal] fear' (1 John 4:18), quoted in the Rule, ch.7. According to chapters 2 and 3 of the Rule, the abbot's work as Christ's representative in the monastery is to teach his spiritual sons 'the fear of the Lord' but, mindful of the coming Judgement, to teach them more by example than by words. Although the drawing probably dates from the time when Dunstan was abbot, he is depicted as a monk, prostrated beneath his inscribed prayer, 'I ask you, merciful Christ, to watch over me, Dunstan, and that you do not let the Taenarian storms swallow me'. He abases himself in profound humility and fear of the Lord, lowering his eyes from the towering vision of Christ and his righteousness.

A picture in an early eleventh-century Psalter from Canterbury may be derived from a frontispiece to the Benedictine Rule. It depicts St Benedict in the image of Christ as king and ruler (Figure 15.5). His halo is inscribed *Scs Benedictus. Pater monachor. et dux* – 'the father and leader of monks' – and a small monastic figure, wearing a girdle marked 'Humility' and holding a book of psalms, prostrates himself at Benedict's feet. Benedict and the small figure are alone fully painted; the community of monks depicted in the other half of the picture is drawn in tinted outline. The kneeling figure may again be an abbot whose personal humility is shown to be the essential condition of his exercise of great authority as Christ's



Figure 15.5 Monks presenting the Rule to St Benedict. Eadui Psalter, Canterbury, beginning eleventh century. © The British Library Board. MS Arundel 155, fol. 133.

representative in the monastic community. Other inscriptions, drawn from the Benedictine Rule or from the Carolingian commentary on it by Smaragdus, further describe the abbot and his relationship with his monks. Benedict, the ideal abbot, wears a diadem inscribed with the words *Timor Dei*, recalling the first step of humility in chapter 7 of the Rule, that a man should keep the ‘fear of the Lord’ always before his eyes (Psalm 35:2). His cope is fastened with a rational or morse inscribed with the word *Ius[tus]*, meaning Justice or Righteousness. The scroll

held by the divine hand overhead reads, on Benedict's side, 'He that hears you, hears me', and on the monks' side, 'Be obedient to your *praepositus* (superior)'.

The book held up by the foremost monk is inscribed: *Ausculata o filii precepti [sic]* ('Listen, my son, to the master's instructions'). These are the opening words of the Rule of St Benedict, as spoken by Christ through Abbot Benedict and his successors. Just a few lines later the Prologue of the Rule cites Psalm 33:11, 'Come my sons, listen to me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord', and immediately quotes John 12:35, 'Run while you have the light of life, that the darkness of death may not overtake you'. The monks in the Psalter picture, one of them bearing a lamp, are seen running on the road of God's commandments, hastening to respond to the teaching of their spiritual father.

The oldest witness of the 'received text' of the Rule of St Benedict (that is the version prescribed in the reforms of Benedict of Aniane and brought to England by Dunstan and others), is a finely decorated manuscript produced in St Augustine's, Canterbury, c. 1000 (London, British Library, MS Harley 5431). The Carolingian Utrecht Psalter was in Christ Church, Canterbury in the eleventh century and its extraordinary impressionistic line drawings influenced several Anglo-Saxon works. The unfinished Harley Psalter, though substituting the Roman psalter text for the Gallican, according to contemporary English custom, sought to follow the Utrecht Psalter in illustrating each psalm with a composite picture of largely literal visualisations of its imagery (Figure 15.6).

Though the Carolingian Renaissance was a formative influence, late Anglo-Saxon art developed very distinctive characteristics in the century before the Norman Conquest, including numerous arresting iconographic motifs, whose theological subtlety and liturgical resonances pre-suppose an informed readership. Images are intimately related to the texts in which they are set, both visually and in terms of providing a pictorial exegesis of the text, and some images also have inscribed *tituli*, often in verse. The following Christological examples are limited to a few of the many depictions of the Incarnation and Crucifixion which appear in a variety of manuscripts and liturgical objects.

The Benedictional of St Aethelwold continues its extended metaphor of sacred architecture by showing the Virgin enthroned at the Annunciation beneath a *baldachino*, indicating the presence of Christ in the temple of her womb (Plate 15.1). The allusion to a canopied eucharistic altar suggests the sacramental as well as the incarnate body of Christ. The Virgin is reading at a lectern, an early pictorial reference to the tradition of her reading Isaiah's prophecy of the virginal conception of Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14, quoted in Matthew 1:23) at the very moment the prophecy was fulfilled. One of the golden hexameters written above describes the heavenly messenger hailing Mary; it recalls and expounds St Luke's account of Gabriel's salutation: 'Behold, you, blessed one, shall bear God and man and at the same time'. As the Virgin receives the angel's words a purple nimbus or cloud descends around her: she is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and divinity takes on human flesh.

The Annunciation picture faces a similarly framed page containing the opening words of the corresponding episcopal blessing. Remarkably, the benediction is



Figure 15.6 Psalm 103. Harley Psalter, Canterbury beginning eleventh century. © The British Library Board. MS Harley 603, fol. 51v.



Plate 15.1 Benedictional of Aethelwold, Winchester, c. 973. Annunciation. © The British Library Board. MS Add. 49598, fol. 5v.

not that for the feast of the Annunciation, but for the First Sunday in Advent. The text refers directly to Christ's advent in the past but prays for his coming in the hearts of the faithful now. It asks that the Lord may send his Spirit 'and irrigate our earth, so that it might bring forth spiritual fruit for us', recalling the prophecy of the Incarnation in Isaiah 45:8, recited each day in the Advent office, which summons heavenly clouds to rain down dew on the earth that it might bring forth a saviour. A third, eschatological dimension of Advent is visualised in the next picture which shows Christ's coming in judgement at the end of time.

The portrayal of the crib as a miniature church in the Benedictional's scene of the Nativity was adapted for the extensive liturgical cycle of illustrations in the early eleventh-century Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges (Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y.6 (274), fol. 32v). The viewer looks through a richly foliated arch to an illusionistic scene of the Mother of God, lying on a bed and attended by a handmaid, with St Joseph seated below, looking intently at the Christ Child. The crib is depicted as an altar of sacrifice projecting in three-quarter view from the bottom corner of the composition and emphasising Christ's role as the cornerstone and foundation of the Church. The heads of ox and ass appear incongruously through the arches, not to suggest the reality of a stable, but to show the fulfilment of Isaiah's incarnational prophecy about the ox and ass recognising their master at his coming (Isaiah 1:3); they were commonly seen as images of the faithful, feeding on Christ as the eucharistic heavenly bread.

In the magnificent Grimbald Gospels, c. 1020, the Virgin and Child appear in a quite different context. St John the Evangelist sits with pen poised and gazes heavenwards (Figure 13.17, Figure 15.7). The divine mystery revealed to him appears in the inspired opening words of his gospel, written in letters of gold on the facing page: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. The revelation is given pictorial expression in the margins of the two pages. Immediately above St John the three Persons of the Trinity are shown enthroned as identical figures, except that the central one is cross-nimbed. In the corresponding central medallion of the upper border of the facing page, the incarnate Word is revealed in an image of the Virgin and Child. The adoration of all the heavenly choirs fills the remaining margins of both pages, ingeniously making the point that Christ's humanity shares in the glory of his eternal divinity.

St John the beloved disciple was revered as a model of the contemplative life, his gospel as a pre-eminent proclamation of Christ's divinity. The image of John the Evangelist writing his gospel was unusually adapted as a standing figure in several differing Anglo-Saxon pictures of the Crucifixion, including the late tenth-century Psalter possibly produced for Ramsey Abbey, which was dedicated to St Benedict, or its founder, Oswald, archbishop of York, another leading figure in the Benedictine reform. The frontispiece image acts as a focus for the spiritual interpretation of the Psalms, which in exegesis, liturgy and the monastic office are seen as revelatory of Christ, his Church and the individual soul. Facing the heavily ornamented initial and golden capitals of the first psalm, *Beatus vir*, a delicate line drawing shows the crucified Christ mourned by his mother (London, British



Figure 15.7 The Grimbold Gospels, St John *incipit* (See also Figure 13.7). © The British Library Board. MS Add. 34890, fol. 115.

Library, MS Harley 2904, fol. 3v). St John with pointing pen directs our attention to what he has written on a scroll. The abbreviated text, *Hic est discipulus qui testimonium perhibet*, is not from his eye-witness testimony of the death of Christ (John 19:35), but from his similarly worded witness of the Resurrection

appearances (John 21:24). The reader is prompted to view the Crucifixion from the perspective of the Resurrection and to recognise the true identity of the Crucified.

The use of ekphrastic inscriptions, which do not describe the subject depicted but often give arcane clues to its significance by posing a paradox or by calling to mind other images and texts already in the reader's memory, is a feature of the art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform and occurs in sophisticated form in a tiny private devotional book written in the 1030s for Ælfwine, dean and then abbot of the New Minster, Winchester. Unlike the Ramsey Psalter picture, Christ is here shown alive and victorious over death, and is recognised by sun and moon as their divine Creator (Figure 15.8). The Crucifixion is again seen through the written testimony of St John, but to different effect. The inscription above reads: 'May Ælfwine be signed in body and mind by this Cross, hanging on which God draws all things to himself'. The final phrase contains an echo of Christ's words concerning his manner of death, uniquely recorded by John, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself' (John 12:32). In John's gospel the phrase, 'I, if I be lifted up' (*Et ego si exaltatus*), can mean both a lifting up to glory and a lifting up to hang or to die. In the inscription the words are put in the third person directly over the Crucifixion, but they are said of God, thereby emphasising Christ's divinity. However, the word *exaltatus* is replaced by the word *suspendens*, which dramatically evokes the idea of God hanging on the Cross and drawing all things to himself: *In qua suspendens tra(hit) d(eus) omnia secum*.

The drawing is positioned in Ælfwine's little book of readings and prayers between St John's Gospel account of the Crucifixion and the offices and prayers of the Cross, which include the hymn from Philippians 2:8–11 concerning Christ's self-emptying and descent at his Incarnation, 'He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God has exalted him [. . .]'. In the feasts for the Invention and Exaltation of the Cross, the Philippians text is paired with John 12:32: 'I, if I be lifted up [. . .] will draw all things to myself'. In Ælfwine's prayer book the text is directly linked with the antiphon used in the Good Friday ceremonies acclaiming the exalted Cross. The rubric says this group of prayers and offices is to be said before an image of the Cross. Later on, there is a prayer 'that the sign of the Cross defend me from evil works, that the sign of the Cross be upon me night and day'.

Ælfwine's inscribed Crucifixion image is unique, but reflects a long devotional tradition also evident in the prayers for the adoration of the Cross quoted in the description of Holy Week observances in the *Regularis Concordia* and in the different iconography of the Crucifixion scene in the eleventh-century Gospels of Judith of Flanders (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 709, fol. 1v). Christ's slumped dead body hangs on a roughly hewn *tau* Cross. In a tender gesture his mother staunches the wound in his side. Unlike some later Gothic images of the hewn Cross, however, this is not primarily an affective meditation on Christ's suffering humanity. The small figure clinging to the wood of the Cross, presumably the patron, looks up; she and the reader are invited to share the viewpoint of St John, who in his gospel presents the Crucifixion as an exaltation. The Cross

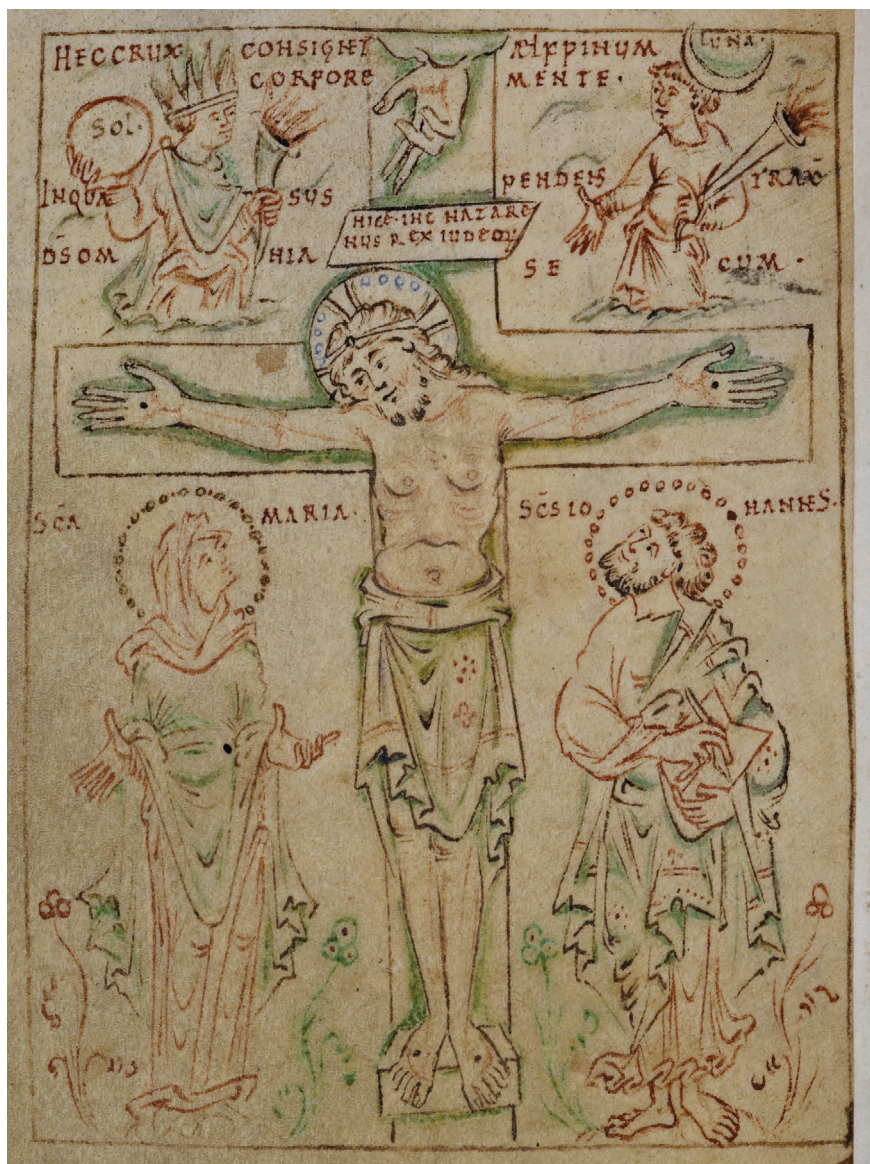


Figure 15.8 Crucifixion. Private devotional prayer book of Ælfwine, Winchester, c. 1023–35. © The British Library Board. MS Cotton Titus, D.XXVII, fol. 65v.

appears not only as a stark man-made gibbet, but as a cosmological axis spanning earth and heaven, the means of human redemption. Seen with the inner eye, the rough-hewn wood bearing Christ is the Tree of Life. Similarly, in the Good Friday ceremonies the Cross is unveiled and exalted with the words: '*Ecce lignum crucis*: Behold the wood of the Cross on which has hung the world's salvation'.

The curious detail of John writing his gospel while stepping up on a rocky mound or miniature mountain, which occurs in other Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, gives visual expression to an image from St Augustine's well-known commentary on John's gospel opening and transposes it to the context of the Crucifixion. Augustine identified John as a mountain, more elevated than the other evangelists, and explained that divine Wisdom did not simply come down to John, but he rose up in mystical ascent to contemplate the divinity of the Word, providing a model for the faithful to lift up their eyes and rise above the carnal to the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures.

The rough-hewn Cross motif survives in several different contexts from the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform, including a portable altar of red porphyry, framed by engraved silver mounts (Paris, Musée de Cluny, CL 11. 459, mid-eleventh century (Plate 12.1)). The heavily sagging body of the dead Christ in the upper mount is attended by the Virgin and St John in the side margins, but their gestures seem contrary to what is described in the hexameters alongside them on the edges of the altar, visible only from the side. On the left side, starting near the figure of the Virgin, the text reads: 'Here the mother mourns him to whom the holy Gabriel cleaves', and on the right, starting near the figure of John: 'The disciple weeps over him whom Raphael always worships'. But in the visual image the Virgin and St John join with the angels pictured below them in looking up at the hewn Cross and raising their hands in gestures of acclamation, not grief. What they are seeing is indicated to the viewer through the altar's display of the dead Christ in conjunction with the triumphant image of the *Agnus Dei*, depicted directly below in the corresponding position on the lower mount.

In the apocalyptic vision of divine majesty, the four living creatures who attend the divine throne – the lion, calf, man and eagle – chant the unending *Sanctus* of the heavenly liturgy and acclaim the Lamb who was once slain to redeem all peoples. On the Anglo-Saxon portable altar they are positioned at the four corners, so that they are seen to attend both the crucified Christ and the glorified Lamb. The sacrificial, sacramental and eschatological associations of the *Agnus Dei* are succinctly implied in the iconography, but the design is only completed in the context of the Mass when the sacramental body of Christ is enthroned on the central slab of the altar.

A small tenth-century ivory provides a final example of the pictorial adaptation of exegetical and liturgical traditions and the use of cryptic *tituli* which characterise much of the art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reform period (Cambridge, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, No. Z 15154, tenth century*). As in

* See the companion volume *History, Hagiography and Biblical Exegesis: Essays on Bede, Adomnán and Thomas Becket*, Chapter 1, p. 3, Figure 1.1.

some manuscripts, the Virgin and St Peter, the patrons of Winchester, attend the enthroned Christ. The difference is that Christ here raises both hands to expose his wounds and, through the words inscribed on the mandorla, invites all to behold his hands and feet: *O vos om(ne)s vi(det)e manus meas at p(edes)*. The inscription is made up of two quite separate texts. The first three words, *O vos omnes*, are from the lamentation of Jeremiah, used in the night office in Holy Week as though spoken by Christ, emotively appealing to 'all you who pass by' (*qui transitis per viam*) to behold his grief, including the wounds of his Passion. In contrast the second part of the inscription is taken from Luke 24:39, where the risen Christ shows the disciples his wounds as a triumphant proof of the Resurrection: 'Behold my hands and feet, it is I myself'. Although the ivory is worn and damaged it is possible to see the discrepancy between the inscribed text, which refers only to the wounded hands and feet, and the image, which also shows Christ's right shoulder bared to reveal the side wound.

Christ's exposition of his five wounds was to appear in the context of the Last Judgement in Romanesque art, but is used differently here. The five wounds are not mentioned together in any single gospel text. St John alone describes the wounding of Christ's side at the Crucifixion and presents it as the fulfilment of prophecy (Zacharias 12:10, John 19:37). The account, read in the gospel for Good Friday, was seen as prophetic of how Christ will be recognised at his Second Coming, when 'every eye shall see him and they also who pierced him' (Revelation 1:7). John alone recounts the risen Christ's invitation to doubting Thomas to see his hands and touch his wounded side, and also notes Christ's reproof, 'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed'. The key words in all these texts, as in Luke's reference to the wounded hands and feet, are verbs of looking, seeing, and beholding, which in Scripture and the liturgy so often act as metaphors of spiritual insight. The concept is repeatedly used in early medieval art to visualise the invisible. The two parts of the ivory's inscription share the word *videte* and its invitation to those who cannot literally see Christ to recognise who he is now, before the Judgement, and to respond accordingly.

In the lower register a Cross is raised up by angels, an image which in many Early Christian examples signifies the exaltation of Christ. There may also be a liturgical reminiscence in the use of the ancient motif on this ivory in conjunction with the eight tiny figures on earth below, who doubtless once looked up. The Good Friday ceremonies, which are described in the *Regularis Concordia*, combine Christ's solemn reproaches of those who fail to recognise him and the acclamation of his divinity at the unveiling and exaltation of the Cross by two deacons. What the community of the faithful 'sees' on looking at the Cross is Christ himself in his inseparable humanity and divinity, bearing the wounds of his Passion yet enthroned in eternal glory.

These are a few of the many remarkable images from the surviving manuscripts and liturgical objects of the century or so before the Norman Conquest which vividly evoke the sensibility and spirituality of late Anglo-Saxon art produced under the influence of the Benedictine monastic reform.

SIGNS OF THE CROSS

Medieval religious images and the interpretation of Scripture

The interpretation of visual images involves considering not only the materiality of individual art objects and their immediate contexts of patronage, location and function but also the complex social and cultural elements of the imaginative world in which they were formed. For the medievalist faced with the scale and importance of religious art from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries, an essential part of the task is to understand the nature and variety of the connection between religious images and texts. The connection with the written word is most obviously apparent in the illumination of biblical, liturgical and devotional texts, which was a major art form throughout the period, but images in other media, including liturgical metalwork and carved ivory, often have allusive or contrapuntal inscriptions as an integral part of their design.¹ Even large-scale works such as wall paintings and stained glass, displayed in places of public worship, generally pre-suppose that the viewer, whether technically literate or not, has some familiarity with Scripture and with particular ways of seeing it. The identification of biblical subject matter alone is rarely enough to enable the modern viewer to understand the original function and possible meaning of images that do not simply illustrate biblical narratives but also offer an interpretation of their significance, drawing on ancient traditions of reading the text. The present chapter first briefly outlines some of those interpretative traditions and then considers their diverse and changing influences on the visual arts in the Middle Ages by examining the central Christian image of the Cross in examples taken from various times, media and contexts.

The spiritual interpretation of Scripture

The interpretative techniques of the early Fathers of the Church were inherited, along with the Latin Bible, by the barbarian or non-Roman peoples of the West

1 T.A. Heslop, 'Worcester Cathedral Chapterhouse and the Harmony of the Testaments', in P. Binski and W. Noel (eds.), *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures: Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, Stroud 2001, pp. 280–311, and S. Lewis, *Reading Images. Narrative discourse and reception in the thirteenth-century illuminated Apocalypse*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 309–36, for the relationship between inscriptions and images in a series of twelfth-century English typological works.

when they received Christianity from the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity. The Anglo-Saxons who settled in Britain had been converted during the seventh century by papal Rome and also by the Irish, who had received Latin Christianity two centuries earlier. In the Northumbrian monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow the inherited traditions of biblical commentary or 'exegesis' found a highly creative exponent in Bede (672/73–735), whose work did much to promote a Latin Bible culture in the early medieval West.²

Though pre-supposing a learned understanding of the literal text of Scripture, the discernment of its inner meaning was regarded as a spiritual act requiring grace. The large body of expository literature produced by early holy fathers of the Church, and cited in its councils, therefore had great authority. Patristic interpretation derived models from the meditation on the sacred Hebrew Scriptures in the light of the Incarnation, to be found in the New Testament itself. Read in this way, the Old Testament was seen to disclose prophecies and prefigurings of Christ, and to offer spiritual guidance for the Christian faithful. The Fathers read a passage from the Old or New Testament in the context of the whole of Scripture, seeking its allegorical or mystical allusions to Christ, its underlying significance for the moral conduct and spiritual growth of the Church and the individual believer on earth, or its implications for the future heavenly life. These compatible ways of understanding the hidden meaning of the literal text of Scripture can all be described as spiritual interpretation.³ It was not a closed system of fixed meanings, but was alert to context and the possibilities of metaphor. The biblical text was believed to be divinely inspired and both its great paradoxes, like the Cross, and some apparently unimportant details, like lists of names and numbers, were regarded as *sacramenta*, or 'signs of salvation' which, if spiritually interpreted, could yield insight. The Fathers' interpretation of such signs often showed the influence of classical rhetorical techniques, and might take the form of further paradox and wordplay, etymologies and numerology, or the linking together of scriptural passages that share a key word or image.

A core of patristic texts was well known throughout the Middle Ages. Extracts and summaries of the Fathers were included in standard annotated copies of the Latin Bible circulating from the twelfth century, and there were important [176] later medieval renewals of patristic study, culminating in published editions by Erasmus (c. 1467–1536) and others. The spiritual interpretation of Scripture, however, expressed a world view by no means confined to those who wrote or read works of biblical commentary. It was central to the seasonal arrangement of scriptural texts in the public liturgy of the Church's year, to the use of the Psalms

2 Bede particularly used Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory the Great, who became acknowledged as the major Latin fathers; their work preserved traditions of earlier Greek commentators, especially Origen.

3 F.M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge 1997, for the shaping of a 'totalizing discourse'; H. de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, The Four Senses of Scripture*, II, trans. E.M. Macierowski, Grand Rapids and Edinburgh 2000.

in the daily monastic office, and to the practice of meditative reading known as *lectio divina*.⁴ Monastic practices were to inspire traditions of private prayer and the development of Books of Hours, widely used by the later medieval laity.⁵ The patristic tradition was further mediated through medieval re-tellings of Scripture in popular devotional works in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, the pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ*. The spiritual interpretation of Scripture is evident in hymns, homilies, hagiography, typological manuals and in many of the teaching and confessional works produced, particularly by Franciscans and Dominicans, in response to the pastoral requirements of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, reiterated by later synods and bishops. Though expressed and understood with widely differing degrees of sophistication, the world view so variously disseminated from its biblical and patristic origins permeated medieval Latin Christian culture, underpinned the writing of post-biblical history and was influential in the formation of vernacular literature and visual art.

The task of trying to understand the relationship between visual images and the written word concerns not only the transmission of this interpretative tradition in the different times, places and contexts in which individual works of medieval art were produced but also the nature of visual images and the function of religious art.⁶ Bede repeated patristic explanations of the divine sanctioning of non-idolatrous religious art and stressed the spiritual value, for example, of depicting events already known, especially the exaltation of the Lord on the Cross, recalling to the minds of the faithful how Christ had conquered death. Like Gregory the Great (540–604), Bede explained that 'the sight of these things often tends to elicit greater compunction in the beholders' and offers 'a living writing', even for the unlearned.⁷ The process of looking at medieval religious images has often been usefully compared with the activity of meditative reading, but images do not offer direct translations of the written word: they present a visual experience.

4 J. Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, London 1978, pp. 87–109; J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Notre Dame 1956.

5 E. Duffy, *Marking the Hours. English People and their Prayers, 1240–1570*, New Haven and London 2007, p. 3, notes nearly 800 surviving manuscript examples and even more printed copies produced for the English market.

6 For some recent approaches, see Lewis, *Reading Images. Narrative discourse and reception in the thirteenth-century illuminated Apocalypse*, pp. 1–16, 337–39; E. Sears and T.K. Thomas (eds.), *Reading Medieval Images. The Art Historian and the Object*, Michigan 2002, pp. 1–7; H.L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing. Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art*, Philadelphia 2000, and H.L. Kessler, *Seeing Medieval Art*, Toronto 2004, pp. 19–42, for the materiality of medieval art. For a sympathetic study of the relationship between visual images and the imaginative universe in which they were created, see P. Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170–1300*, New Haven and London 2004.

7 *De templo* 2, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latin a, 119A (Turnhout 1969), 212–13; S. Connolly (trans.), *Bede: On the Temple*, Liverpool 1995, p. 91; C. Chazelle, 'Pictures, Books and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's letters to Serenus of Marseilles', *Word and Image*, vol. 6, 1990, pp. 138–53.

Medieval artists used pictorial conventions and motifs, many derived from the art of the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity, in which classical traditions of realism were in the process of transformation. Christian art had first developed in this culture, assimilating the pictorial conventions of late Roman art to represent or subvert normal temporal and spatial relationships, or to denote authority by scale, centrality and attributes, for example. The conventions were adapted to new purposes and contexts, however, including the genre of non-narrative, iconic devotional images, so important to Western medieval and Renaissance art.⁸ An enormous range of biblical subject matter had by the sixth century already acquired characteristic modes of representation, or iconography, formed by the two diverse traditions of Greco-Roman art and Judeo-Christian biblical interpretation. In a very different culture artists and patrons in Britain and Ireland in the early Middle Ages selectively received and adapted such models and developed new means of visual eloquence. Art did not passively reflect the changing spirituality and sensibility of later centuries, but often creatively articulated or re-formulated contemporary concerns: some medieval images took on the authority of a text.

The following examples of the iconography of the Cross illustrate just some of the ways in which visual images, the written word and the spiritual interpretation of Scripture were closely related in early medieval monastic art. As art attracted increasingly diverse patronage and was produced for places of public worship and for the private devotional use of the laity, there were remarkable continuities as well as important changes in the nature of that relationship in the later Middle Ages.

The sign of the Cross

The representation of the Crucifixion was slow to develop its dominant role in Christian art; examples survive from the early fifth century, but there are remarkably few from before the seventh century.⁹ Far more typically in the world of Late Antiquity, the Cross was depicted as an abstract symbol: the intersection of vertical and horizontal lines, with four equilateral arms or with the four terminals [177] embellished, sometimes combined with abbreviated inscriptions of Christ's titles.¹⁰ Such images offer a visual counterpart to the work of the early Fathers of the Church, who expounded the mystery of the Cross hidden beneath the outward 'sign' of its physical appearance. They rhetorically described the four projections

8 H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence. A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago 1994, pp. 21–143, 377–457.

9 G. Schiller, *The Iconography of Christian Art*, trans. Janet Seligman, 2 vols., London 1972, 2, pp. 88–161, surveys medieval Crucifixion iconography.

10 For example, the Greek letters *chi* and *rho* (*Christus*, meaning Messiah), the *alpha* and *omega*, or the names of the dead, united with Christ. For later inscribed stone crosses from Hartlepool, Wearmouth-Jarrow and Lindisfarne, see E. Okasha, *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-runic Inscriptions*, Cambridge 1971, figs. 45–50, 75–82, 92.

of the Cross as penetrating all creation and converging on the centre from east and west, north and south; they pictured its horizontal beam as extending from the rising to the setting sun, the vertical shaft spanning earth and heaven.¹¹ It formed the very structure of divine creation and encompassed one universal faith. Such expositions reflect the influence of Neoplatonic concepts of number and cosmology that were familiar in the late Roman world, particularly the idea that the divine creator is evident in the cosmic harmony underlying the fourfold ordering of time, space and matter (such as the four seasons, the four cardinal directions and the four elements). St Paul's image of 'the breadth and length, and height and depth' of the love of Christ came to be associated with the four dimensions of the Cross.¹² Paul was describing how God, the hidden creator of all things, had been made manifest in Christ (Ephesians 3:8–10, 18). For early Christian commentators the cosmological Cross was a figure of Christ himself, the divine Creator. By taking on human flesh and nature at a particular time and place in history, and stretching out his hands on the Cross, he had reversed the fall of Adam and Eve, renewed creation and restored humanity, which had originally been made in the divine image. The concept of the cosmological Cross, represented through various pictorial conventions, survives in many medieval depictions of the Crucifixion, as will later be seen.

Insular gospel books are famous for their adaptation of motifs from the native repertoires of Irish and Germanic Anglo-Saxon metalwork, but their abstract designs of spirals, interlace and rectilinear ornament often convey these patristic themes. Drawing on the concept of a fourfold universe and the importance of the number four in biblical symbolism, the Fathers, readily followed by Irish commentators, had developed the idea of the harmonious fourfold nature of the gospel, in which the incarnate Christ is revealed. The concept is expressed visually in numerous Insular gospel books that depict symbols of the four evangelists in the four angles of a cosmological Cross.¹³

In the Lindisfarne Gospels aniconic carpet pages present the sign of the Cross as a focus for meditation at the beginning of the book's prefatory material and also at the threshold of each of the four constituent gospels.¹⁴ The prefaces include copies of patristic texts that affirm the divine authority and harmony of the fourfold gospel taken to the four corners of the earth. Jerome (c. 347–420), for example, here cites biblical instances of quaternities, particularly the Old and New

11 H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, London 1963, pp. 46–68; G.B. Ladner, *God, Cosmos, and Humankind: The World of Early Christian Symbolism*, Berkeley 1995, pp. 99–106.

12 R.P.H. Green (ed. and trans.), *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, Oxford 1999, pp. 128–29.

13 J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular traditions of the Evangelists: Exegesis and Iconography', in A.M. Luiselli Fadda and É. Ó Carragáin (eds.), *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in età Romanobarbarica*, Rome 1998, pp. 49–94.

14 British Library, London, Cotton MS Nero D. IV, fols. 2v, 26v, 94v, 138v, 210v. See Hawkes, 'The Lindisfarne Gospels', in *The History of British Art 600–1600*, ed. Tim Ayers (Tate Britain and the Yale Centre for British Art 2008), pp. 198–99.

Testament visions of four winged creatures with the features of a man, lion, ox and eagle (Ezekiel 1:5–10; Revelation 4:6–8), which the Fathers had interpreted as symbolic of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. All four harmoniously testify to the same Christ, but each reveals an aspect of his identity – his humanity, kingship, priesthood or divinity – in a particular way, which is epitomised in the opening words of each gospel. Individual author portraits of the evangelists, each with his symbolic creature, precede the four constituent gospels in the Lindisfarne Gospels. Each portrait is followed by a carpet page facing the beginning of one of the four gospels, whose opening words are transformed by their layout and ornamentation into an abstract visual image.¹⁵

The sign of the Cross dominates every carpet page yet is unique in each because of the multiplicity of forms with which it is depicted. It appears as an imposing Latin cross on fol. 26v facing Matthew's gospel (Figure 15.8), but as a Greek cross or a stepped cross, with variously shaped terminals that themselves form four Latin crosses or T-shaped (*tau*) crosses, in the carpet pages prefacing Mark, Luke and John. Signs of the omnipresence of Christ are also hidden from the casual eye in the tiny crosses concealed within each design and its interstices.¹⁶ The frame of each cross-carpet page is embellished at the four corners and at the four projecting cardinal points. The effect is enhanced in the examples facing the openings of Mark, Luke and John, where the crosses are equal-armed and centred, so that both the transverse and upright beams are aligned with the cardinal points and divide the page into four quarters, filled with quadripartite ornament. The cruciform abstract design of the four carpet pages evokes, as no figural composition could, the fourfold nature of divine creation, the diversity and unity of the fourfold gospel and the mystery of the Cross, in all of which Christ is revealed to those accustomed to searching for the spiritual meaning lying beneath the literal text of Scripture.

Such designs might inspire or deepen awe and devotion; they do not offer narrative illustration or didactic visual [178] aids for the illiterate. The illuminated Insular gospel book, written in stately script, and sumptuously decorated and bound, enshrined a sacred text. It was also a ceremonial liturgical object, used in the Eucharist and enthroned on the altar. The production of such a book, whether by a single monk or several, was a contemplative work representing the faith and worship of the monastic community. The book was a potent symbol of the Word of God whose Incarnation is described in its pages; it contains arcane images in which his identity might be discerned and further pondered by the initiated who saw the book at close quarters.

15 M. Krasnodebska-D'Aughton, 'Decoration of the *In Principio* Initials in Early Insular Manuscripts: Christ as a Visible Image of the Invisible God', *Word and Image*, vol. 18, no. 2, April–June 2002, pp. 105–22.

16 R.B.K. Stevenson, 'Aspects of Ambiguity in Crosses and Interlace', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 44–45, 1981, pp. 1–27, for examples in other media.

God and man: early iconography of the Crucifixion

The Christological debates of the early Church councils, whose reverberations continued into the seventh and eighth centuries, had profound implications for the representation of the Crucifixion. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 presented its definition of belief concerning the identity of Christ as that revealed in the Scriptures, handed down by the apostles and Fathers of the Church, and confessed by all in the creed. It incorporated Pope Leo the Great's exposition of orthodox belief, frequently affirmed in the West, which explained the divine and human natures of Christ as distinct and unconfused, but united in one person at the Incarnation; Christ became the mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5). Taking on all the weaknesses of the human condition, except sin, he redeemed fallen humanity from the penalty of its sin by overcoming death. Leo further explained that Christ suffered on the Cross in his human nature; in his divinity he could not suffer but, because his two natures were inseparably combined in one person, it could be said that the Son of God was crucified.¹⁷

The difficulties of portraying this paradox visually are evident. The representations of the Crucifixion to be considered here show some of the ways in which medieval artists attempted to depict the invisible God made visible in the incarnate Christ. The iconographic conventions they used to suggest the identity of the Crucified as God and man commonly depart from the literal text of the gospel accounts of the Crucifixion, but adapt other scriptural texts cited by the evangelists or patristic commentators to explain the underlying and continuing significance of the event. Artists were similarly concerned to show the Crucifixion as the turning point in history, which transformed humanity and offered the possibility of eternal life for all. Visual representations often indicate how the viewer should respond in order to share fully in the grace of redemption. Some Crucifixion images, for example, allude to the Eucharist in which Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is made present and the faithful become sacramentally one with him; many later medieval representations stress the suffering of Christ as the focus of affective meditation arousing compassion and penitence. Repeatedly, the viewer is invited to look at the Crucified with the inner eye: the act of seeing is itself presented as a potentially transforming experience. The theological implications of picturing the Crucifixion are demonstrated in its earliest extant representation in Insular manuscripts, whose iconography provides an important comparison with subsequent developments.

The Durham Gospels was produced in the late seventh or possibly the early eighth century, probably in Northumbria, though it preserves some Irish traditions more [179] fully than the Lindisfarne Gospels.¹⁸ Its Crucifixion iconography

17 *Tome of Leo the Great*, N.P. Tanner (ed. and trans.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols., London and Georgetown 1990, 1, pp. 77–82.

18 Durham Cathedral Library, MS A.11.17, fol. 38a verso. C. Verey, T.J. Brown and E. Coatsworth (eds.), *The Durham Gospels*, Early English Manuscripts in facsimile, vol. 20, Copenhagen 1980; G. Henderson, *From Durrow to Kells*, London 1987, pp. 57–68, 80–88.

became an enduring type in Irish art, but the Durham Gospels image alone is framed by expository inscriptions that give valuable insights into how this particular example may have been understood in a literate monastic culture (Plate 3.7). It is adapted from a Crucifixion type found in the Mediterranean world from the late sixth century.¹⁹ The long-robed Christ is pictured as if simultaneously receiving the sponge of vinegar to his lips and the spear to his side, though the gospel specifically reports them as consecutive events (John 19:28–34). Other details seen in the more naturalistic art of Byzantine and Roman examples, such as the setting, the two thieves, Mary and John, are stripped away. The Insular composition is reduced to a stylised two-dimensional image, with the dominant figure of Christ forming the central axis. He is symmetrically flanked by the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer beneath the cross arms, and by two angelic beings above. The vertical shaft of the Cross and the body of Christ thus span heaven and earth, and the horizontal beam on which his hands are outstretched in priestly oblation is so low and wide that all four terminals of the Cross reach the frame, suggesting the cardinal points. These are pictorial conventions, whose origins in the concept of the cosmological Cross have already been discussed, whereby the Crucified is identified with the divine Creator.

St John's Gospel uniquely describes the wounding of Christ's side and specifies that it happened after he died (John 19:28–34). In the Durham Gospels the wounded Christ is pictured erect and with eyes wide open, indicating his victory over death. This is a radical departure from the literal text of Scripture, yet the image reveals the significance of the event in a way that is compatible with St John's own exposition. St John presents the Crucifixion as a triumph by showing that the wounding was part of the divine plan of salvation and fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, which he quotes: 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' (John 19:37; Zacharias 12:10). This mysterious prophetic text is also recalled in the opening vision of the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation, believed to have been written by the same St John. The Durham picture puts into visual terms the common patristic linking of the Crucifixion and the vision of Christ's Second Coming in glory at the end of time, when he is at last recognised by all the peoples of the earth: 'every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him'. In the apocalyptic vision his true identity is further revealed in the solemn opening and closing incantations, 'I am *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and the ending [*initium et finis*], which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty'; 'I am [...] the first and the last' (Revelation 1:8, 17; 22:13). The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet here serve as a sign of perfection and eternal divinity, which is customarily expressed in the oracular self-proclamations of God Almighty in the Old Testament, such as: 'I am the first and the last' (Isaiah

19 L. Nees, 'On the Image of Christ Crucified in Early Medieval Art', in M.C. Ferrari and A. Meyer (eds.), *Il Volto Santo in Europa. Culto e immagini del Crocifisso nel Medioevo*, Lucca 2005, pp. 244–85.

41:4; 44:6). The display of the two Greek letters on images of the exalted Cross was commonplace and they later appear in medieval representations of Christ enthroned in majesty; here, however, their connotations of divinity and majesty are transferred to an image of the crucified Christ.

The Durham Gospels picture shows the mocking inscription written over Christ's head at the Crucifixion: 'This is Jesus the king of the Jews' (Matthew 27:37). Patristic and Insular commentators interpreted the literal words to reveal Christ's divine sovereignty. In the Crucifixion picture this spiritual interpretation is expressed through the texts from Revelation 1:8, namely the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega* and the words *initium* and *et finis*, which are written either side of the cross-head and immeasurably expand a reading of the title-board. Christ's divinity was veiled from most eyes at the Crucifixion by his suffering humanity, but he is here shown as a hieratic figure robed in purple and gold, and attended by cherubim so that, for those with eyes to see, the Crucifixion itself reveals the exaltation of his humanity to share in the glory of his timeless divinity. With commanding gaze he draws the present viewer to 'look on him whom they pierced' and to recognise now, before the Second Coming, that the crucified 'king of the Jews' is God Almighty.

The context of the picture in the book further extends the range of allusion. The image is not located in St John's account of the Crucifixion at all, but on the reverse of the last page of Matthew's Gospel, where an ornamented border frames and highlights Christ's last words to his disciples before he disappeared from their physical sight (Figure 3.10). He commanded them to teach and baptise all peoples and promised that he would be with his followers until the end of the world (Matthew 28:17–20). This text and the Crucifixion image are thematically related. The wound in Christ's side, from which water and blood issued (John 19:34), was universally interpreted as the source of baptism [180] and the Eucharist in which Christ remains invisibly present to the faithful.²⁰ The liturgy presents each Eucharist as a participation in the body of Christ and a commemoration of his death until he comes again (I Corinthians 10:16–17; 11:24–26). St Paul had also spoken of baptism as a sacramental sharing in the death of Christ (Romans 6:3–4). Numerous commentaries and monastic texts urged the necessity of actively entering into the life-long process of what baptism symbolises, by daily dying to sin, imitating Christ and taking up the Cross. Similarly, the Latin inscription running outside the lateral and lower frame of the Durham Crucifixion refers to Christ as overcoming death, 'renewing our life if we suffer along with him' that 'he might make us also to reign with him': by sharing Christ's suffering, restored humanity will share in his divinity.

But the Durham Gospels image of Christ flanked by sponge and spear does not realistically picture his suffering. Rather, it symbolically presents the unity in one

20 See Augustine's influential commentary on John's Gospel, *In Iohannis Evangelium, Tractatus* 120, 2, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 36 (Turnhout 1954), 661, translated in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 7, 434.

person of his human nature, in which he experienced thirst and suffering, and his divine nature, by which he triumphed over death and his wound became the sacramental source of eternal life for believers. The opening of the inscription placed above the Crucified in the upper margin enjoins the viewer: 'Know who and what he is'. In a cryptic definition of Christ's divine and human natures combined in one person, and in marked contrast to the visual image, this inscription refers to him as one 'who suffered for us'. It is a notable example of the Insular use of the rhetorical technique of *ekphrasis*: the inscription does not redundantly describe what is depicted in the devotional icon, but brings other remembered images and texts before the informed viewer's inner eye, expanding and deepening what is already known.

The Tree of Life

The technique is used on a monumental scale in the different medium and context of the Ruthwell Cross, whose red sandstone shaft with equilateral cross-head stands over five metres high (Figure 16.1). It is sited on the Solway Firth, at the far edge of what the Roman imperial world had regarded as the ends of the earth, yet shows remarkable skill in relief sculpture and familiarity with themes from contemporary Roman Christian culture.²¹ Latin inscriptions, or *tituli*, are inscribed around deeply cut figural panels on the two broad sides of the shaft, depicting scenes of the [181] recognition of Christ's identity by John the Baptist, the evangelists, the man born blind who was healed and spiritually saw that Christ was the Son of God (John 9), other figures from the gospels, post-biblical desert monks and all creation. They are implicitly joined in their witness by the Anglo-Saxons themselves, at the ends of the earth, who had more recently become part of the people of God, for the Ruthwell Cross also speaks in the language of Old English heroic verse, inscribed in runes in the borders of a sculpted vine-scroll on the two narrow sides of the monument.

The classical vine-scroll had been used in Late Antiquity as a eucharistic image of the incorporation of all the diverse members of the universal Church into the body of Christ, and as an eschatological image of their union with him in heaven. Alluding to the Old Testament metaphor of the vine and vineyard, Christ had described himself as 'the true vine' and his followers as the branches (John 15:1–5). The Old Testament also draws on the ancient Middle Eastern concept of the Tree of Life, the axis at the centre of the world, which joins earth and heaven, supports the constellations and provides food, healing and immortality for all. Patristic commentators had interpreted the Tree of Life (*lignum vitae*) in the middle of the earthly paradise of Eden in Genesis 2:9 as a mystical prefiguring of the redeeming

21 É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the 'Dream of the Rood' Tradition*, London 2005, discusses the Ruthwell Cross in the context of the Roman cult of the Cross and the Lenten and Easter liturgy.



Figure 16.1 The Ruthwell Cross, decorated with figural scenes with Latin inscriptions on the two broad sides and vine-scrolls with Old English inscriptions on the two narrow sides, probably early eighth century. Red sandstone, approx. $549 \times 50 \times 34$ ($26 \times 19 \times 13\frac{1}{2}$). Now located in Ruthwell Parish Church, Dumfriesshire. Photo: Jane Hawkes.

Cross at the centre of the world, identified with Jerusalem (Ezekiel 5:5). The final apocalyptic vision pictures the *lignum vitae* in the heavenly paradise of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:1–2).

A rooted vine tree, inhabited by birds and beasts feeding on its fruit, rises the full height of the tapering cross-shaft at Ruthwell on both of its narrow sides.²² It reveals the Cross to be the cosmological Tree of Life, a figure of the sacramental and glorified body of Christ. An apparently incompatible concept, however, is contained in the riddling runes of the Old English poem incised in the borders of the vine. This inscription voices the testimony of the Cross, on which ‘the lord of heaven’ was lifted up: ‘I was drenched with blood poured from the man’s side’.²³

22 R.N. Bailey, *England’s First Sculptors*, Toronto 1996, pp. 52–54, pls. 19–22, on vine-scroll.

23 É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 2005, pp. 280–303, figs. 1–4, for the *tituli*.



Figure 16.2 The Brussels Cross reliquary, early eleventh century. Oak core with silver sheeting on back and sides, partly gilded. 54.9×27.7 ($21\frac{1}{2} \times 11$). Treasury of the Cathedral of St Michel and St Gudule, Brussels. © KIK-IRPA, Brussels.

Vine-scroll and runes characterise the Cross as both Tree of Life and gallows compelling the onlooker to ponder the paradox of the divine and human natures of the Crucified.

In the same rhetorical tradition whereby inanimate objects tell their story, the early eleventh-century Brussels Cross speaks of itself as an artefact through a prominently displayed vernacular inscription: 'Drahmal made me' (Figure 16.2). But it speaks again with the voice of the Cross of the Crucifixion through a verse *titulus* in Old English, inscribed in Roman letters along its narrow edges and visible only to those who look closely: 'Rood [Cross] is my name; once, trembling and drenched with blood, I bore the mighty king'.²⁴ The words are in stark contrast to the material and decorative splendour of the object, raised up and carried

24 J. Backhouse, D.H. Turner and L. Webster (eds.), *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966–1066*, exh. cat., British Museum, London 1984, no.75, pl. XXIII; É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 2005, fig. 55, for the inscriptions.

in liturgical procession. The jewelled front is missing but the wooden core, which held a relic of the True Cross, is covered in engraved silver on the surviving reverse side, the nodes which project from its borders perhaps suggesting the knots of wood beneath. At the centre Christ is depicted as the Lamb of God, surrounded at the four terminals of the cross by gilded medallions of the four winged creatures who, in the apocalyptic vision of [182] Christ's divine majesty at the Second Coming, surround his throne and chant his unending praise: 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come' (Revelation 4:7–8). This heavenly liturgy recalls the hymn of the seraphim in Isaiah's vision of the divine majesty (Isaiah 6:3), echoed in the Sanctus in the eucharistic prayer of the earthly liturgy.

Allusions to the Tree of Life and the jewelled Cross are also combined in an Anglo-Saxon reliquary crucifix, c. 1000 (Figure 16.3).²⁵ Gold sheeting decorated with foliate filigree scrolls covers the wooden core of the Cross, and the four bright enamels at its terminals depict the four winged creatures who attend the enthroned Christ in the Apocalyptic vision. The cross acts as a foil to the carved ivory figure of the crucified Christ whom it bears: he is shown stripped to the waist, his arms and body slightly sagging, his head sunk on his shoulder and his eyes closed. The poignant depiction of his humanity is a striking departure from the early Insular iconography of the Crucifixion seen in the Durham Gospels. This crucifix and the Brussels Cross are from among the liturgical objects and illuminated manuscripts produced during the Benedictine monastic reform in southern England, under the patronage of the Old English monarchy, from the mid-tenth century until the Norman Conquest. The work shows the influence of Carolingian and Ottonian art, which had assimilated a larger range of figural subject matter and a greater degree of naturalism from the Mediterranean world of Late [183] Antiquity than was characteristic of the early Insular period. But late Anglo-Saxon art also developed its own distinctive character and innovative iconography.²⁶

The Virgin and St John: witnesses of the Crucifixion

The early Insular Crucifixion image of the robed Christ, flanked by cherubim and the spear-bearer and sponge-bearer, was largely replaced in post-Carolingian Anglo-Saxon art by the more intimate devotional tableau of Mary and John at the foot of the Cross, and by the depiction of Christ with a loincloth and naked torso, as in continental and earlier Roman art.²⁷ The fourth gospel alone describes the Virgin at the foot of the Cross with the beloved disciple (John 19:26–27),

25 Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. 7943. 1862. Backhouse, Turner and Webster, *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, 1984, no.118, pl. XXVI.

26 For the liturgical and exegetical influences in the formation of one great illuminated manuscript, the *Benedictional of Aethelwold*, produced for a leader of the monastic reform, see R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Aethelwold*, Princeton 1995.

27 B. Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, Cambridge 1990, pls. I–XI, XIV–XVI.



Figure 16.3 Anglo-Saxon reliquary crucifixion. c. 1000. Wooden core with gold sheeting, cloisonné enamels, walrus ivory figure. $18.5 \times 13.7 \times 1.4$ ($7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2}$).
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

who was identified with John the Evangelist. A fine tinted line drawing of this Crucifixion type serves as a frontispiece to the late tenth-century Ramsey Psalter (Figure 13.1).²⁸ Christ's head is bowed, the blood from his wounds is visible, and the viewer's initial response to his suffering and death is cued by the downcast head and mourning gesture of the Virgin. But the Cross, like that in the Durham Gospels, spans earth and heaven; the body of Christ remains on a dominant scale and unrealistically posed, with arms extended horizontally and hands opened to suggest oblation. Moreover, the upward gaze of John towards the title-board

²⁸ British Library, London, MS Harley 2904, fol. 3v. E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 2, London 1976, no. 41, ill. 142. The Crucifixion faces the opening words of Ps.1, *beatus vir*, inscribed in gold. The blessed man, likened to a fruitful tree planted by running waters, was interpreted by patristic commentators as referring to Christ, and the Psalm was early illustrated with a Crucifixion scene, as in the Carolingian Stuttgart Psalter, c. 820.

directs the viewer to look again and follow his animated gesture and pointing pen, to read what he has written on his scroll.

In the gospel the Evangelist testifies that he witnessed the opening of Christ's side (John 19:35). In the Ramsey Psalter picture, however, the abbreviated text on John's scroll is from his similar but later attestation as the witness of the Resurrection: 'This is the disciple who gives testimony of these things and has written these things' (John 21:24; John 20:8). Seeing the Crucifixion from the perspective of the Resurrection transforms a reading of the title-board of the Cross and the understanding of who Christ is. There are other examples in late Anglo-Saxon monastic art where the unusual image of John writing his gospel testimony beside the Cross does not show the actual words he writes but is combined with more pictorial ways of suggesting Christ's identity, most notably in the frontispiece of the eleventh-century gospel book of Judith of Flanders, wife of Earl Tostig of Northumbria (Figure 13.9).²⁹

The book opens with the startling image of Christ hanging from a hewn timber cross that looks like a roughly lopped tree. His head slumps on his shoulder, his eyes are closed, the arms sag below the horizontal beam. The whiteness of the body, its serpentine pose and delineated rib cage, seem to anticipate the selective realism with which some later medieval works depict his humanity and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies of his suffering, particularly Psalm 21, which is quoted in the gospel accounts of the Crucifixion and used in the liturgy of Holy Week. But the frontispiece has important differences from those later medieval pictures that elicit the compassionate participation of the viewer in the sufferings of Christ.

The cross is in the T-shaped form of the Hebrew letter *tau*, interpreted in exegesis as the sign of deliverance with which the ancient Israelites had been marked and as prefiguring the sign of the redeeming Cross (Exodus 12:7; Ezekiel 9:4; Revelation 7:3). The term *lignum* (literally meaning 'wood', but often understood as 'tree') is used in numerous Old Testament passages that were regarded as prophetic of the Cross and in several New Testament references to the Crucifixion, such as 'he bore our sins in his own body on the tree' (I Peter 2:24).³⁰ The evocation of the Cross as both wood and tree was particularly familiar from the sixth-century hymns of Venantius Fortunatus used on Good Friday. *Crux fidelis* also refers to the antithetical relationship between the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, by which humankind fell, and the Tree of the Cross, the means of redemption. The hymn *Vexilla Regis* incorporates the words, '*Regnavit a ligno Deus*: the Lord our God reigns from a tree', from the Old Latin text of Psalm 95 (96):10.³¹ Judith of Flanders's gospel-book frontispiece presents a visual conceit

29 Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, MS 709, fol. 1v. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, 1976, no. 93, ill. 289.

30 Genesis 2:9; 22:6-9; 1 Kings 17:10; Acts 5:30, 10:39; Galatians 3:13, citing Deut. 21:23.

31 Szoverffy 1966.

or riddle, exploiting the ambiguity of the term *lignum*. What to the outward eye is a man-made object of dead wood on which Christ is suspended, is to the inner eye of the faithful the Tree of Life on which he is exalted. The paradox is symbolically enacted in the ceremony of the Adoration of the Cross (*Adoratio Crucis*) on Good Friday, when a cross is unveiled and raised up by deacons with the acclamation: 'Ecce lignum crucis: Behold the wood of the Cross on which has hung the world's salvation'.³² The personifications of sun and moon in the gospel book picture are classical cosmological symbols whose presence helps to reveal that the rough-hewn Cross [184] is in fact the *lignum vitae*, joining earth and heaven. Sun and moon recognise their Creator in the Crucified, and veil their faces from the sight of his holiness.

The small kneeling figure of a female suppliant, probably the patron, embraces the Cross and clings to it as the means of her salvation and heavenward ascent. In this there is some resemblance to the dreamer awaiting Christ's return in judgement at the end of the Old English poem known as *The Dream of the Rood*. The Cross is revealed to the dreamer through shape-shifting visions as a cosmic tree of glory, a sign of salvation towering beneath the heavens, and a gallows made of timber derived from a tree hewn down by men. The Rood is both the means of exaltation and an instrument of suffering; through this paradox, it is identified with Christ. As in the vernacular Crucifixion poem on the Ruthwell Cross and the verse distich engraved on the Brussels Cross, the Rood speaks. It bears witness that at the Crucifixion 'All creation wept; they lamented the king's death: Christ was on the Cross'.³³ The poem's series of changing images opens up for the reader the possibility of a variety of insights into the identity of Christ and the nature of Redemption. In Judith of Flanders's Gospels frontispiece, however, illumination has to be conveyed through a single enigmatic image.

The picture recalls a long tradition of private devotion associated with the practice of prayerful reading in the monastic office, from which the *Prayers and Meditations* of St Anselm (Archbishop of Canterbury, 1093–1109) were to develop in the 1070s.³⁴ Over the previous two centuries ardent prayers on the Holy Cross, to Christ, and to Mary and John, were among those added to Psalters or compiled

32 Symons 1953, p. 42. The exegetical and liturgical traditions sketched here long pre-date the twelfth-century combination of early apocryphal and legendary material on the Cross and its material origins, later summarised in the *Golden Legend's* history of Adam and the Invention of the Holy Cross, which shows that the Cross by which humanity is saved came of the tree by which humanity had been damned. J. O'Reilly, 'The Rough-Hewn Cross in Anglo-Saxon Art', in M. Ryan (ed.), *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500–1200*, Dublin 1987, pp. 153–58, and *eadem*, 'The Trees of Eden in Medieval Iconography', in P. Morris and D. Sawyer (eds.), *A Walk in the Garden. Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, Sheffield 1992, pp. 167–204.

33 R. Hamer, *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse*, London 1970, pp. 160–71 (quote at 164–65, line 56).

34 R. Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion. Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200*, New York 2002, pp. 141–92, on 'Praying to the crucified Christ'. For the importance of the inscribed word on early medieval images of the Cross, see G. Henderson, *Early Medieval*, Harmondsworth 1972, pp. 201–38.

in separate *libelli*, owned by laity as well as monks.³⁵ An early eleventh-century example demonstrates the close relationship between such devotional texts and visual art. The tiny prayer book of Ælfwine, deacon of the New Minster, Winchester, has a line drawing of the Crucifixion with Mary and John shown writing (Figure 13.11). It is set between St John's Gospel account of the Crucifixion and the readings, offices and prayers of the Cross, which according to a rubric, are to be said before an image of the [185] Cross.³⁶ The drawing is inscribed with a prayer seeking the powerful protection of the Cross: 'May Ælfwine be signed in body and mind by this Cross, hanging on which God draws all things to himself'. The inscription plays on John's account of Christ's words concerning his death, 'I, if I be lifted up [*exaltatus*] from the earth, will draw all things to myself' (John 12:32), but replaces *exaltatus* with *suspendens*, to create the paradoxical image of God hanging on the Cross. The text of John 12:32 appears in feasts of the Cross in the prayer book, where it is paired with a liturgically important text describing Christ's descent at his Incarnation: 'He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God has exalted him [. . .] that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow' (Philippians 2:8–11).

In the Gospels of Judith of Flanders there is no inscription, but Mary and John guide the kneeling figure, and the viewer, to see the Crucifixion as an exaltation. Mary and John are depicted on the same scale as Christ; their swaying forms, with knees bending to the right, accentuate his contrary pose, and their serene gestures and gaze direct attention up at him, countering the downward pull of his slumped body. They are not presented in attitudes of mourning but as witnesses; they suggest the role of the Church and the faithful disciple. In the tradition of seated evangelist portraits, St John was pictured writing or meditating on the opening verse of his gospel which, by alluding to the account of divine creation at the opening of Genesis, identifies Christ as the divine Creator-Logos. St Augustine said that John in writing his gospel rose, like a mountain, in mystical ascent to contemplate the divinity of the Word, providing a model for the faithful to lift up their eyes and rise above the carnal to the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures.³⁷ In Judith's frontispiece this well-known metaphor of John's spiritual ascent and insight is transposed to the Crucifixion. The kneeling woman clasps the Cross, but points to St John and looks at him as he rises up and gazes

35 A. Wilmart, 'Prières médiévales pour l'adoration de la croix', *Ephemerides liturgicae*, 1932, pp. 22–65; L. Gjerlow, *Adoratio Crucis: The Regularis Concordia and the Decreta Lanfranci*, Oslo 1961, pp. 13–28.

36 British Library, London, Cotton MS D.xvii, fol. 65v. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, 1976, no. 77, ill. 246.

37 J. O'Reilly, 'St John as a Figure of the Contemplative Life: Text and Image in the Art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Reform', in N.L. Ramsay, M.J. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (eds.), *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, Woodbridge 1992, pp. 165–85, pp. 170–75.

up at the Crucified. Similarly, in a fervent prayer to John the Evangelist, Anselm pleaded: 'Let your gaze become my prayer'.³⁸

During the period of the Anglo-Saxon monastic reform the image of Mary and John at the foot of the Cross was depicted with iconographic inventiveness, drawing on a rich tradition of scriptural interpretation and liturgically derived texts. There were new developments in depicting the Passion in English art in the period following the Norman Conquest, such as showing the Deposition from the Cross, a sequence of incidents in the Passion narrative or, from the 1260s onwards, a fuller representation of the scene at Calvary. There was also the later proliferation in various media of affective devotional images of the Instruments of the Passion, and the body of the Crucified shown separately from the Crucifixion, as in the Image of Pity, the Wounds of Christ and the Pietà.³⁹ The tableau of the Virgin and St John flanking the Cross, however, remained a favoured means of picturing the Crucifixion throughout the Middle Ages, especially in English manuscripts and notably in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Psalters. Two examples will be discussed, the Amesbury and De Lisle Psalters, demonstrating elements of continuity and change in later medieval iconography. [186]

The Incarnation and the Crucifixion

The Hebrew Psalms were traditionally read as the voice of Christ speaking to the Church, and the response of the faithful in praise and penitence, intercession and petition. This Christological interpretation had long been reflected in illuminated copies of the Psalter, where the Crucifixion could appear as the frontispiece, as in the Ramsey Psalter, or in prefatory pictorial cycles of the life of Christ, which from the twelfth century took increasingly varied forms; they were combined with Old Testament scenes, emphasising the Fall and Redemption, and with other material, including devotional images of the Virgin and visualisations of the Last Judgement, as will be seen.⁴⁰

38 B. Ward (trans.), *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, Harmondsworth 1973, p. 169, lines 196–98 and also 215–16.

39 P. Binski and S. Panayotova (eds.), *The Cambridge Illuminations*, exh. cat., Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, London and Turnout 2005, pp. 163–233, on illustrated books of private devotion; Duffy *Marking the Hours*, 2007, figs. 15, 17, 20, 28, 32, 48–50; R. Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, Stroud 2004, pp. 123–43, for the Pietà; R. Moss, 'Permanent Expressions of Piety: The Secular and the Sacred in Later Medieval Stone Sculpture', in R. Moss, C. Ó Clabhaigh and S. Ryan (eds.), *Art and Devotion in Late Medieval Ireland*, Dublin 2007, pp. 72–97.

40 K. Haney, *The St Albans Psalter: An Anglo-Norman Song of Faith*, New York 2002, pp. 229–305, for an introduction to Psalm exegesis; W. Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 120–65; K. Haney, *The Winchester Psalter: An Iconographic Study*, Leicester 1986; M.T. Gibson, T.A. Heslop and R.W. Pfaff (eds.), *The Eadwine Psalter: Text, Image, and Monastic Culture in Twelfth Century Canterbury*, London 1992, pp. 25–42, for the associated cycle of biblical illustrations.



Figure 16.4 The Crucifixion, Amesbury Psalter, c. 1250–60. The Warden and Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford. MS 6, fol. 3r (olim fol. 5).

The Amesbury Psalter, c. 1250–60, shows the dead Christ on a roughly hewn Cross (Figure 16.4).⁴¹ Blood issues from his five wounds, his head is bowed, the rib-cage emphasised, and both feet are fixed with a single nail. Mary and John are shown with downcast heads and classical gestures of grief and mourning. Yet the Cross may be read as the Tree of Life, for it spans the universe depicted by the frame and is flanked by the sun and moon. There are also new means of alluding to its redemptive power. In four corner medallions angels with censers kneel in adoration, as though disposed around a throne or altar. Scenes at the four cardinal points of the frame introduce further material as visual expositions of the main image, though thereby reducing the element of puzzling ambiguity seen in earlier examples of the iconography of the hewn Cross. In the upper frame a symbol of the Godhead shows the Crucifixion to be the work of the Trinity. From the foot

41 All Souls College, Oxford, MS 6, fol. 5. Morgan 1988, no. 101, fig. 29. Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 2004, pp. 209–30, figs. 165, 169, 170, for the Tree of Life in the Evesham, Amesbury and Robert de Lindsey Psalters.

of the Cross blood streams down on the dead who, restored to life, rise from their tombs. In the border to Christ's right, a personification of *Ecclesia* is aligned with the Virgin and raises a chalice to indicate the sacramental nature of the life-giving blood received from Christ's wound by the faithful. In the corresponding position in the opposite border is the personification of *Synagoga*, which in this context denotes the passing of the first stage of God's covenant with humanity in the Old Testament, and the extension of divine revelation to the new chosen people, the universal Church. The depictions of *Synagoga* and *Ecclesia* on either side of the Cross reveal it to be the turning point in providential history.

The Crucifixion scene on fol. 5 is part of the Psalter's prefatory sequence of four full-page illuminations, which expands its range of allusion: the final image on fol. 6 shows Christ triumphantly enthroned in heavenly majesty with the world as his footstool, inscribed with the *alpha* and *omega*. The page that precedes the Crucifixion scene is closely linked to it by a similar frame and colouring, and by the figure of the Virgin, dressed just as she is at the foot of the Cross and with the same tender inclination of her head, but here enthroned with the Child and enshrined in architectural splendour, suggesting the new Temple of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Figure 16.5).⁴² She is offering her breast to the cross-nimbed infant on her lap, and her feet rest on the vanquished lion and dragon, rather as Christ in majesty is shown in some earlier thirteenth-century Psalters with the two beasts beneath his feet, in abbreviated allusion to his fulfilment of the prophecy that the Messiah would trample underfoot the asp and basilisk, the lion and dragon (Psalm 90 [91]:13).

At first sight the Amesbury Psalter's use of the motif in an image of the Virgin seems arbitrary. The Fathers, however, had linked the Psalm prophecy to the Incarnation, which alone made possible the Crucifixion and the overcoming of the power of the devil. Early visual interpretations of the Psalm verse paired the Annunciation or Nativity with an image of Christ holding the triumphal standard of the Cross and trampling the beasts underfoot.⁴³ Patristic tradition had also connected the Psalmist's prophecy with the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, explaining that, after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, God put enmity between the serpent and the woman and her seed until the coming of the seed born of Mary, Christ, who was appointed to tread down the serpent's head. The Virgin Annunciate, obedient to God's will, was sometimes depicted treading under foot the serpent who had tempted Eve to disobedience. In the thirteenth century such

42 N.J. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts (I), 1190–1250 and (II) 1250–85*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 4, 2 vols., London 1982 and 1988, vol. II, no. 101, fig. 23; A. Martindale, *Gothic Art*, London 1967, col. fig. 53.

43 For example, the Genoels-Elderen ivory diptych, of possible Insular influence, L. Webster and J. Backhouse (eds.), *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture, AD 600–900*, exh. cat., British Museum, London 1991, no. 141. There was an early tradition that the Crucifixion had occurred at the Spring equinox (25 March in the Julian calendar), the same date on which the feast of the Annunciation was celebrated from the seventh century.



Figure 16.5 The Virgin and Child, Amesbury Psalter. The Warden and Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford. MS 6, fol. 2r.

theological and iconographic traditions were cross fertilised with the immensely popular devotional image of the Virgin and Child. Amongst the relief sculptures of the Angel Choir in Lincoln Cathedral, c. 1260–75, in the bays that depict the Fall and the Passion, an angel censures the seated Virgin and Child. Mary has her foot on the serpent and, as in the Amesbury Psalter, offers her breast to the Child.⁴⁴ The vanquished beasts of Psalm 90 beneath her feet in the Amesbury Psalter attest her exalted part in the Incarnation and therefore in the divine work of redemption. Christ drew his sinless humanity from his virgin mother and her gesture of nursing him (*virgo lactans*) further emphasises [187] his human nature, which was crucial to his redemptive role as the mediator between God and humankind.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 2004, p. 277, fig. 227.

⁴⁵ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 2004, fig. 93, for the *virgo lactans* revered by Jocelin, Bishop of Wells, on his seal, c. 1206; she is flanked by lay patrons at prayer in the Cuerden Psalter, c. 1270, J.J.G. Alexander and P. Binski (eds.), *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts, London 1987, no. 355.

Mother and child are shown censed by angels and this heavenly yet intimate image is venerated by the small earthly figure of a woman. She holds a scroll inscribed with the opening words of her own prayer, which floats upwards to the Virgin and prompts the response of the reader: 'Hail, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed [. . .]'

The inscription recalls Gabriel's salutation of the Virgin at the Annunciation (Luke 1:28) but additionally includes the name of Mary. Gabriel's next words, 'blessed art thou among women', also open Elizabeth's salutation of Mary at the Visitation (Luke 1:42). The combined texts form the Ave Maria, a universally popular devotion in the cult of the Virgin, often recited before her image.⁴⁶ The angelic salutation appears as the daily invitatory at Matins in the Little Office or Hours of the Virgin, which had developed from the monastic office and formed the main text in Books of Hours; it was customarily illustrated by the Annunciation.⁴⁷ The Amesbury Psalter image of the Virgin and Child, preceded by the opening picture of the Annunciation on fol. 3, can therefore be seen as providing a particular devotional context in which to view the Virgin and St John standing at the foot of the Cross.

Mary and John are also prominent in Crucifixion scenes that do not use the iconography of the hewn Cross. In the unusually encyclopaedic cycle of pictures surviving from the Psalter of Robert de Lisle, c. 1310, they are set against architectural panels of burnished ornament and flank an improbably slender Cross on which the dead Christ is suspended (Figure 16.6).⁴⁸ His arms hang well below the crossbeam and his feet are nailed together high on the Cross, so that his knees are now drawn up and his body sharply contorted, an iconographic type that had appeared in the later thirteenth century. The moving but mannered depiction of his human vulnerability and the grief of Mary and John do not attempt to make the historical Crucifixion present in all its physical horror but to persuade the viewer of its continuing spiritual reality; the image's sorrowful beauty and restraint are an intrinsic part of its rhetorical power to arrest attention and provide a focus for meditation.

The Cross is green, of cosmological proportions, and the foliage and fruit beyond the terminals reveal it to be the Tree of Life. At its top a pelican on a nest of chicks pierces her own breast. This offers another instance of the adaptation of motifs from other contexts and their insertion into later medieval depictions of

46 A. Van Dijk, 'The Angelic Salutation in Early Byzantine and Medieval Annunciation Imagery', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 81, no. 3, Sept. 1999, pp. 420–36, pp. 420, 425. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts* II, 1982, no. 175, fig. 370, for a psalter and hymnal, c. 1280–90, associating the crowned *virgo lactans* with Marian prayers, including the Ave Maria; K.A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth Century England: Three Women and their Books of Hours*, London 2003, pl. 6, figs. 119, 120, for the patron with the *virgo lactans* in the Neville of Thornby Hours, and the Virgin teaching the Ave Maria in the Taymouth Hours.

47 Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 2007, p. 37.

48 L.F. Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert de Lisle*, London 1983, p. 66, pl. 17.

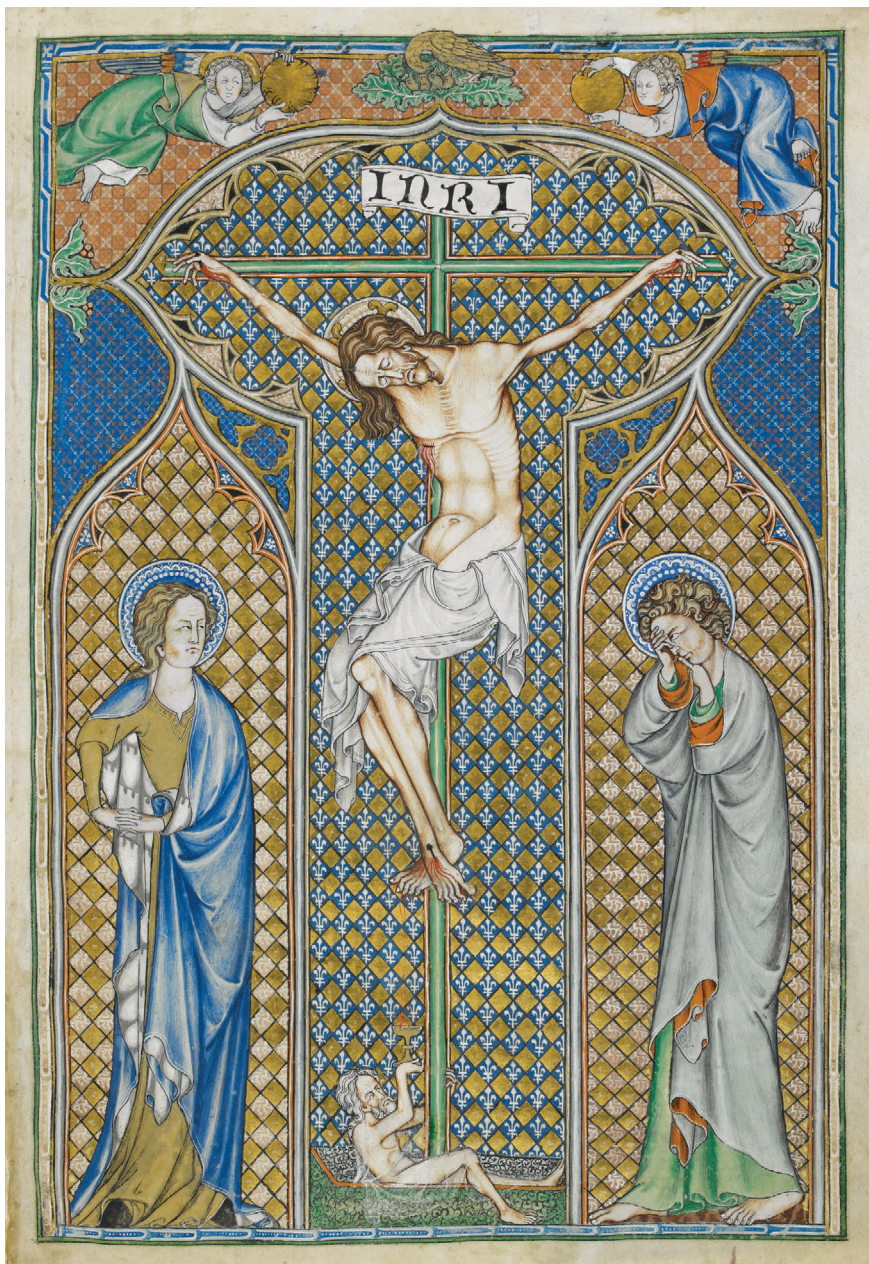


Figure 16.6 Psalter of Robert de Lisle, Crucifixion. © The British Library Board.
MS Arundel 83 II, fol. 132.

the *lignum vitae*. Augustine's commentary on Psalm 101 (102):7 notes that the pelican is said to slay its young and bring them to life after three days, feeding them on its own blood; in this it resembles Christ, 'by whose blood we have been called to life'. The image draws on the *Physiologus* tradition of moralised animal lore popularised in illustrated medieval bestiaries, which related the action of the pelican to the Crucifixion and the sacraments.⁴⁹ In the Psalter picture the self-wounding pelican is emblematic of Christ's sacrifice and the relationship between his wound and the Eucharist, whose redemptive power is visualised in a further motif. The Tree of Life stems from the open grave of Adam who, like a figure of Everyman, rises to receive the blood of the Redeemer in a raised chalice. This in turn is expanded by other Tree diagrams in the prefatory cycle.⁵⁰

The Crucifixion scene is part of a diptych. The facing page, like a miniature altar panel, depicts a vision of the Virgin and Child enthroned over the vanquished lion and dragon of Psalm 90, and censured by angels within a foliated architectural shrine (Figure 16.7).⁵¹ In the earlier example of the iconography in the Amesbury Psalter (Figure 16.5), the Christ Child holds a fruit, an abbreviated allusion to the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil by which Adam fell, and to the salvation of his descendants through the second Adam and the fruit of the Tree of Life. In the De Lisle Psalter the Child clutches a goldfinch, whose thorny habitat was seen as an allusion to the Passion. Mary is here shown crowned, the royal bride as well as the virgin mother of Christ. Some of the complex strands in this concept, which was of particular importance in later medieval devotion and art, can only be briefly indicated. New Testament references to Christ's union with his Church use the image of the Church as his bride.⁵² From the Cross, Christ had said of Mary to his beloved disciple, 'Behold thy mother' (John 19:27); the Fathers saw Mary as a figure of the Church, the mother of all the faithful. Patristic commentaries on the Song of Songs in the Old Testament interpreted the exchanges of the royal bridegroom and bride as a dialogue between Christ and his Church or the individual soul. A number of the text's images were early applied to Mary and were echoed in the Little Office of the Virgin; from the twelfth century the Song

49 Ladner, *God, Cosmos, and Humankind*, 1995, pp. 121–25; M. Hoogvliet, 'Animals in Context: Beasts on the Hereford Map and Medieval Natural History', in P.D.A. Harvey (ed.), *The Hereford World Map. Medieval World Maps and their Context*, London 2006, pp. 153–65, at pp. 158–61, fig. 5.

50 The pelican appears again in the De Lisle Psalter, fol. 125v, in the inscribed *lignum vitae* diagram of Franciscan influence. The traditional contrasted Tree of Vices and Tree of Virtues, fols. 128v–129, are visually assimilated to the dry Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, flanked by Adam and Eve at the Fall, and the green Tree of Life with the Annunciation of Mary, the second Eve, at its foot. Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert de Lisle*, 1983, p. 60, pls. 8, 9, 14; O'Reilly 'The Trees of Eden in Medieval Iconography', 1992, pp. 188–90, pls. 12, 13.

51 Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert de Lisle*, 1983, pl. 16.

52 II Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:23–28; Revelation 21:9.



Figure 16.7 The Virgin and Child, Psalter of Robert de Lisle, c. 1310. On parchment 35 × 23 (13¾ × 9). © The British Library Board. MS Arundel 83 II, fol. 13v.

of Songs was often read as a dialogue between Christ and Mary, his bride and the exemplar of all the faithful.⁵³ [190]

In the De Lisle Psalter picture the Virgin holds a green shoot. It is leafier than the sprouting sceptre held like royal regalia by the crowned and enthroned Virgin with Child in twelfth-century examples.⁵⁴ In some representations of the popular Jesse Tree the Virgin holds the Christ Child and a burgeoning shoot; this detail may in the context of the Psalter picture similarly allude to the well-known patristic identification of the Virgin (*virgo*) as the *virga*, or shoot from the root of Jesse, in Isaiah's prophecy of the Incarnation and Christ's human descent from David's

53 Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 2002, pp. 244–88, 249; A. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages*, Cornell 1990, pp. 42–72, 4–3.

54 C.M. Kauffmann, 'British Library, Lansdowne Ms 383: The Shaftesbury Psalter?', in P. Binski and W. Noel (eds.), *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures: Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, Stroud 2001, pp. 256–79, at pp. 264–5, fig. 7 and n. 16.

royal line (Isaiah 11:1–3).⁵⁵ In the picture Mary is also presented as the *virgo inter virgines*, flanked by two popular virgin martyrs, St Catherine of Alexandria, a notable ‘bride of Christ’, and St Margaret, patron of women in childbirth; they are shown as small statues in the niches of the Virgin’s shrine.

The elaborate layering of details in the complementary scenes of the Crucifixion and the Virgin and Child in both the Amesbury and De Lisle Psalters provides visual delights that slow down the process of looking. It is a means of picturing epithets of the Virgin, like the listing of her attributes in the *Obsecro te*, a popular prayer to the Virgin in Books of Hours, and of visualising images contained in familiar scriptural texts, which here act as wordless glosses on the main subject.⁵⁶ Such representations, however, taken from a variety of contexts and media, give a curiously literal, circumscribed form to biblical sacred metaphors that had been so allusively expounded in patristic tradition.

The Cross, the five wounds and the Last Judgement

The final group of examples illustrating the changing relationships between medieval visual images, texts and the spiritual interpretation of Scripture highlights other aspects of the iconography of the Cross, not in scenes of the Crucifixion, but at the Second Coming and the Last Judgement. The paradox of the Cross presented in the Insular and late Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion scenes already discussed is differently expressed in a small, late tenth-century Anglo-Saxon carved ivory (Figure 16.8).⁵⁷ The Virgin and St Peter, the heavenly patrons of the New Minster, Winchester, attend the enthroned Christ, who raises his hands, palms outwards. Through the words inscribed on his oval mandorla, he commands onlookers to behold his hands and feet: *O vos om(ne)s vi(det)e manus meas et p(edes)*. The inscription is made up of two separate texts. The first three words are from the Lamentation of Jeremiah, used in the night office in Holy Week as though spoken by Christ, emotively appealing to ‘all you who pass by’ to behold his grief, including the wounds of his Passion. In contrast, the second part of the inscription is taken from Luke 24:39, where the risen Christ shows the disciples his wounds as a proof of the Resurrection: ‘Behold my hands and feet, it is I myself’. There is a discrepancy, therefore, between the ivory’s inscription, which refers only to the

55 For example, Bibliothèque municipale, Dijon, MS 129, fol. 4v. See A. Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, Oxford 1934, pls. 5, 8, and the entry for Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Bodley 269 (S.C. 1935), fol. iii, c. 1130–40, in C.M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066–1190*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, III, London 1975, p. 86, no. 52, ill. 135.

56 R.S. Wieck, *The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*, London 1988, pp. 157–67, for the texts of the Hours of the Virgin and the Marian prayers, *Obsecro te* and *O intemerata*.

57 Cambridge, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, inv. Z 15154.



Figure 16.8 Inscribed carved panel depicting the wounded and enthroned Christ. Anglo-Saxon whalebone ivory, probably late tenth century. Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, no. Z 15154.

wounded hands and feet, and the image, which depicts Christ with his upper-right torso bared to reveal the wound in his side as well.

The five wounds are not mentioned together in any single gospel text. They are a harmonisation of scriptural passages in which verbs of seeing are again important. As already noted, only John describes the wounding of Christ's side, which was both the fulfilment of prophecy, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced', and a prefiguring of his Second Coming, 'when every eye shall see [recognise] him' (John 19:37, Zacharias 12:10, Revelation 17). John [191] describes the risen Christ's invitation to doubting Thomas to see the nail prints in his hands and touch his wounded side. This elicited from Thomas the belated recognition of Christ's identity, 'My Lord and my God'. Christ reproved him, 'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed' (John 20:25–29). The Cambridge ivory plaque invites the beholder to see with the inner eye what cannot now be seen physically.

In the Good Friday ceremonies, after the unveiled cross is raised by two deacons and adored by the congregation, the chanting of Christ's solemn reproaches

to his people, who had failed to recognise him at the Crucifixion, alternates with acclamations of his divinity. In the lower register of the ivory a cross is exalted by two angels. The small figures of the faithful community below are now damaged, but presumably once looked up at the Cross; what it signifies is visualised above in the wounded yet enthroned figure of Christ. The viewer sees with them the vision of Christ's humanity, raised up to share in the glory of his eternal divinity.⁵⁸

Already in contemporary Old English poetry, notably *Christ III*, preserved in the tenth-century Exeter Book, Christ exhorts sinners to behold his five wounds in the rather different context of the Last Judgement. The work draws on the gospel prophecy that at the end of time 'the sign of the Son of Man' (understood to be the Cross) will appear in the heavens, announcing Christ's Second Coming in judgement and that, seeing him, 'all the tribes of the earth shall mourn' (Matthew 24:29–30), conscious of their sins. This passage in turn evokes the chain of texts concerning Christ's side wound, especially Revelation 17 ('and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. All the tribes of the earth shall mourn'). This chain was important, with Acts 1:11, in forming the belief that Christ would return at the end of time as he had left this earth, bearing the marks of his suffering humanity in his glorified body.

The scene of Christ exhibiting his wounds and the angels displaying the Cross was probably not represented in English art in the full context of the Last Judgement until after the Norman Conquest, when it appeared in wall paintings at Clayton, Sussex.⁵⁹ At the end of the prefatory cycle of Old and New Testament scenes in the Winchester Psalter, c. 1150, Christ is shown enthroned, his hands raised and side exposed; the Anglo-Norman French inscription describes him as God in majesty showing the wound in his side.⁶⁰ As in the Anglo-Saxon ivory, he is placed immediately above the image of two angels with the Cross, though here, like two deacons at the *Adoratio Crucis*, they exalt the Cross before an altar. But the image now forms the centrepiece of a nine-page sequence showing the dead rising from their graves, angels with the instruments of the Passion, the apostles, scenes of the Blessed and torments of the Damned and the locking of the mouth of hell. The components of this extended Last Judgement sequence had already been assembled in a single image concluding a cycle of drawings of gospel scenes, possibly from Bury St Edmunds, c. 1130.⁶¹ Christ, enthroned within a mandorla, shows his

58 J. O'Reilly, 'Early Medieval Text and Image: The Wounded and Exalted Christ', *Peritia*, vols. 6–7, 1988, pp. 72–118, pl. 1; pp. 103–11, on seeing the five wounds. Leo the Great in his *Tome* regarded Christ's invitation to behold his wounds (Luke 24:39) as offering spiritual insight into the continued union of his divine and human natures in one person after the Resurrection.

59 C.R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800–1200*, New Haven and London 1993, pp. 324–46, n. 19, fig. 332.

60 British Library, London, Cotton MS Nero c.iv, fol. 35. F. Wormald, *The Winchester Psalter*, London 1973, p. 35.

61 Pembroke College, Cambridge, MS 120, fol. 6. Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, 1975, no. 35, ill. 102.



Figure 16.9 The Last Judgement, detached leaf from the Psalter of William de Brailes, c. 1240. Parchment 25×17 ($9\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{3}{4}$). Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. MS 330, leaf 3.

wounds and an enormous Cross is held upright before him by two angels, but with the important difference that it also forms the central feature of the display of the Instruments of the Passion – the nails, spear and crown of thorns.

The Last Judgement depicted on one small page of the detached leaves from the Psalter of William de Brailes, c. 1240, has a number of significant changes and additions to this iconography, some of which were to be popularised in later public and monumental representations of Doomsday (Figure 16.9).⁶² The exaltation of the Cross has now disappeared; the Cross is one of the Instruments of the Passion displayed by angels in the two upper medallions. Christ with bared side raises his hands and exhibits his five wounds. The lion and dragon of Psalm 90 lie defeated beneath his feet. The book on his knee displays the *alpha* and *omega*, as in contemporary scenes of his divine majesty, but he is here unambiguously enthroned as Judge. Two inscribed scrolls pronounce his words to the separated

⁶² Binski and Panayotova, *The Cambridge Illuminations*, 2005, no. 70.

groups on his right and left: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father' and 'Depart from me you cursed' (Matthew 25:34, 41). In Matthew's Gospel these are the words of judgement that will be said to the blessed and the damned respectively, that is, to those who during their lifetime saw Christ in the needy and practised the works of mercy, and those who failed to do so.⁶³ The artist himself is shown narrowly saved from the fate of the damned. The Matthean texts had already been used in the context of Judgement in Old English poetry, and by much earlier homilists and exegetes. St Peter and St Paul are clearly identified among the apostles who sit in judgement, but the Virgin is shown on Christ's right as an intercessor for humanity.

By the end of the thirteenth century the motif of Mary offering her breast, seen in images of her with the Christ [194] Child, as in the Amesbury Psalter, was to appear in some Psalters and in the frame of the Hereford world map,⁶⁴ in the quite different context of the Last Judgement, where she kneels to intercede for her spiritual sons and daughters (Figure 16.5).⁶⁵ In the recently recovered wall-painting of Domsday in the large parish church of Holy Trinity, Coventry, c. 1430–40,⁶⁶ the Virgin as the mother of the whole Church pleads forgiveness on their behalf; she proffers her naked breast before the wounded Judge, reminding him of the humanity he received from her and shares with them. She is joined by another powerful intercessor, John the Baptist. He had been the first to recognise Christ's divinity, from his mother's womb (Luke 1:44), and acclaimed him as the one 'who takes away the sins of the world' (John 1:29).⁶⁷ The central image is the gigantic figure of Christ enthroned in a heavenly paradisaical landscape, the sphere of the earth as his footstool. With raised hands he displays his bared torso and the five bleeding wounds of his Passion, as testimony of his Incarnation and Crucifixion, and as a solemn reproach to those who have continued to wound him by their sins and now stand before 'him whom they pierced'. The Instruments of the Passion were once visible above him. Christ's body is so pitted with the many smaller wounds of his scourging that he looks leprous, as in some late medieval

63 The Matthean texts are used in a rare example of a Last Judgement scene prefacing Ps. 1 in a psalter combined with the Hours of the Virgin, c. 1170, Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, 1975, no. 89, fig. 254.

64 See Tim Ayers, 'The Hereford Wall Map', in Ayers, *The History of British Art 600–1600*, pp. 226–27, fig. 133.

65 The Huth Psalter, British Library, London, MS Add 38116, fol. 13v, after 1280, and Queen Mary Psalter, British Library, London, MS Royal 2B.vii, c. 1290–1300: N.R. Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought: The Hereford Paradigm*, Woodbridge 2001, pp. 65, 67, figs. 2, 5, 6. Fulton 2002, pp. 205–43, for 'Praying to the Mother of the crucified Judge'.

66 See Miriam Gill, 'Medieval Wall Painting of the Doom, Holy Trinity Church, Coventry', in Ayers, *The History of British Art 600–1600*, pp. 200–01 and fig. 114.

67 John the Baptist's intercessory power and status as the 'revealer of God' had long been revered, Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, 1973, pp. 127–34, lines 175–76, 196–200. The poet implores John, who showed to the world him who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29): 'by the grace given to you, gain for me that mercy to take away my sins'.

representations of the Crucifixion and Pietà, which depict, not the gospel Passion narrative, but the literal fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies of the suffering Messiah, festering with sores ‘from the sole of the foot to the top of the head’ and ‘as it were a leper [. . .] wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins’ (Isaiah 1:6; 53:4–5).⁶⁸

The heavenly gates, tormenting devils and the jaws of hell’s mouth set the scene like the staging of a mystery play. As the last trumpet sounds, figures of the dead, men and women, laity and tonsured clerics, rise from their tombs and come before the judgement seat. They are naked, except for those whose status is indicated by their headgear – cardinals’ hats, the occasional crown or papal tiara, the fashionable head-dresses of alewives. The destinations of the blessed and the damned, in the kingdom of God or in everlasting fire, are pronounced through two scrolls inscribed with the usual texts of Matthew 25:34, 41, which issue like speech balloons either side of Christ’s head.⁶⁹ He is flanked by the martyred princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul, and the rest of the twelve apostles destined to help judge ‘the twelve tribes of Israel’, that is, the whole Church (Matthew 19:28). The Coventry Doom painting, one of a great number that once existed throughout Britain, is in the traditional position, high on the east wall of the nave, above the arch of the crossing leading to the chancel, so that its warning of the need for amendment of life is directed towards the lay congregation in the nave. [196] They are exhorted to look on Christ’s wounds and the instruments of his Passion, and to recognise who the Crucified is, now, before his divine power is made unmistakably evident at the Last Judgement. The diverse exegetical and iconographic origins of some features of the scene have been indicated, but this circumstantial depiction of the Last Judgement, which is nowhere described as such in Scripture, has itself taken on the quality of an authoritative prophetic narrative.

In the Late Middle Ages the image of Christ crucified was frequently viewed in dramatic conjunction with the image of Christ enthroned, because the Last Judgement was customarily painted above or behind the rood screen, which supported monumental and even life-sized statues of the Crucifixion, flanked by Mary and John the Evangelist, and sometimes by cherubim or seraphim. The rood figures,

68 Examples of the ‘leprous’ body of Christ in other contexts: the Crucifixion in the Holkham Bible Picture Book, 1330s, P. Binski, *The Painted Chamber at Westminster*, occasional paper (new series) IX, The Society of Antiquaries of London, London 1986, fig. 182; Pietà in fifteenth-century stained glass at Long Melford church, Suffolk, Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, 2004, fig. 92.

69 The seven works of corporal mercy deriving from Matthew 25:34–46, along with other ‘sevens’, such as the seven sacraments, featured in catechetical programmes from the thirteenth century. Remnants survive from a scheme in stained glass in the parochial part of Holy Trinity Church, Tattershall, Lincs, c. 1480–88: R. Marks and P. Williamson (eds.), *Gothic: Art for England 1400–1547*, exh. cat., Victoria and Albert Museum, London 2003, no. 292.



Figure 16.10 Remains of rood loft, made from wood panelling, and outline of the cross which once surmounted the openwork chancel screen, fourteenth century, Church of St Ellyw, Llanelieu, Breconshire. Photo: © Alex Ramsay.

and the supporting screens of wood or stone that separated the chancel from the nave, once existed in very large numbers, probably many hundreds, but were particularly vulnerable to iconoclasm (Figure 16.10).⁷⁰ Fifteenth-century accounts of the celebrated Brecon Rood; figural fragments from other Welsh examples, notably the late thirteenth-century wooden sculpture of Christ from Kemeys Inferior, Monmouthshire; and the fourteenth-century figures of Christ and the Virgin from the rood formerly at Mochdre, Montgomeryshire (Figure 16.11), as well as remnants of painted screens and their depiction of universal and local saints that survive especially in East Anglia and Devon, can only hint at what has been lost.⁷¹ Where a rood screen closed off the high altar from the view of the laity, it might serve as a reredos to the nave altar, but the liturgy in the chancel of a parish church would have been viewed from the nave through the pierced arches of the

70 See also illustration of the rood cross and panelling from St Ellyw's church, Wales, in Ayers, *The History of British Art 600–1600*, p. 260, and featured on p. 196 as Figure 1.

71 P. Lord, *Medieval Vision: The Visual Culture of Wales*, Cardiff 2003, pp. 168–72, pls. 264–67; E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580*, New Haven and London 1992, pp. 157–60, figs. 5, 44, 55; Marks and Williamson, *Gothic: Art for England*, 2003, nos. 326, 435.



Figure 16.11 Damaged figure of Christ, formerly on rood screen at Church of All Saints, Mochdre, Montgomeryshire, second half of fourteenth century. Carved wood. © National Museum of Wales.

rood screen supporting the Crucifix. Christ's universal redemptive sacrifice, made at the centre of the earth, was thereby made vividly present in the liturgical life of the local church.⁷²

In grand liturgical spaces the theme could be further orchestrated, as in York Minster. Behind the high altar in the centre of the eastern arm, a rood screen probably once spanned the width of the presbytery, before the magnificent backdrop

⁷² The identification of Christ's sacramental body on the altar with his crucified and glorified body could also be suggested by the celebrant's vestments. Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, 1987, no. 578, for the Marnhull orphrey, c. 1315–35, a cross-shaped panel in *opus anglicanum* on the back of the chasuble, visible to the congregation as the priest celebrated before the altar. It depicts the Crucifixion on a hewn timber cross, flanked by the Virgin and St John, directly below the enthroned Christ exhibiting his wounds, flanked by angels with the instruments of the Passion, and attended by St Peter and St Paul.

of John Thornton of Coventry's surviving east window, 1405–08.⁷³ Christopher Norton has memorably pictured the effect for those in the choir stalls of seeing the sacrifice of the Mass offered at the high altar beneath the rood screen: its Crucifixion tableau would be outlined against the great expanse of the Trinitarian east window, the shape of the Cross overlaying the complex numerology of the window's depiction of the history of the world and human salvation, the apocalyptic vision, the Last Judgement and the hosts of the blessed.⁷⁴ In the Heavenly Jerusalem Christ is shown holding a book inscribed with the letters *alpha* and *omega*, the same sign by which God Almighty proclaims his eternal divinity at the opening of the Apocalypse and in the east window's top-most light: *Ego sum alpha et omega* (Revelation 1:8). The immense vision of Christ as both the crucified Redeemer and the beginning and end of all things is that evoked in miniature by different iconographic means in the context of the Durham Gospels, over seven centuries earlier. [197]

73 See Heather Gilderdale Scott, 'John Thornton of Coventry', in Ayers, *The History of British Art*, pp. 170–71, figs. 94–95.

74 C. Norton, 'Sacred Space and Sacred History: The Glazing of the Eastern Arm of York Minster', in *Glasmalerei im Kontext Bildprogramme und Raumfunktionen*, Akten des XXII. Internationalen Colloquiums des Corpus Vitrearum, Nuremberg 2005, pp. 167–81, pp. 177–79, figs. 9, 11, 12. I am grateful to Dr Tim Ayers for this reference.

THE TREES OF EDEN IN MEDIEVAL ICONOGRAPHY

Early Christian traditions of illustrating the story of the Garden of Eden have been largely reconstructed from their surviving medieval derivatives. The Cotton Genesis, a fifth- or early sixth-century Greek manuscript, was almost destroyed by fire in 1731, but four sumptuous Carolingian Bibles remain whose Genesis frontispieces are descended from the family of manuscripts to which the Cotton Genesis belonged.¹ The four ninth-century works make independent selections from the Early Christian cycle and adapt its illustrations (which originally appeared within the biblical text) to fit three or four horizontal registers on a single page. If all these scenes are added up, they suggest the original cycle may have illustrated sixteen episodes from the Creation of Adam to the Expulsion (Genesis 2:7–3:24), but eleventh- and twelfth-century derivatives of other, now lost, Carolingian works, or of Early Christian manuscripts, suggest there may have been even more, perhaps nineteen separate scenes.² In addition to reflecting classical iconography in the depiction of the serpent and the creator's Promethean moulding of Adam, they include several extrabiblical features which Herbert Kessler has shown also occur in the apocryphon *Life of Adam and Eve*, although controversy continues as to whether such elements of Jewish exegesis and legend were transmitted to the Early Christian cycle through a shared literary tradition or through a Jewish pictorial cycle into which the image of the beardless Creator-Logos was inserted.³ The Cotton Genesis depicts the creator with a cross-nimbus and a cross-sceptre, details repeated in the thirteenth-century mosaics in the atrium of San Marco,

1 BL, Cod. Cotton Otho B. vi; K. Weitzmann, 'Observations on the Cotton Genesis Fragments', in K. Weitzmann (ed.), *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honour of A.M. Friedman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 112–31.

2 The Moutier-Grandval Bible (London, BL, Cod Add. Ms. 10546, fol. 5v); the Bamberg Bible (Bamberg, Staatsbibl. Misc. class. Bibl. 1, fol. 7v); the Vivian Bible, also known as the First Bible of Charles the Bald (Paris, B.N., Cod. lat. 1, fol. 10v); the Bible of San Paolo (Rome, San Paolo fuori le mura, fol. 8v), illustrated in H. Kessler, *The Illustrated Bibles from Tours* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), pls. 1–4. Their relationship with the early Christian Genesis cycle is discussed pp. 8–35, pls. 5–37.

3 Kessler, *Illustrated Bibles*, pp. 28–32.

Venice, which were probably excerpted from the Cotton Genesis itself.⁴ An entire cupola is devoted to the opening chapters of Genesis, with the outer of three concentric rings of scenes depicting Genesis 2:20–3:24 in twelve episodes. Not only are some of the original extrabiblical features reproduced, such as the depiction of the *lignum scientiae* as a fig tree, [167] but other details, drawn from a medieval iconography, are inserted. It is clear that even pictures which originated in extraordinarily detailed textual illustration do not simply illustrate the text.

In the later Middle Ages, the story of Eden was also pictured in sequence outside the context of the text, translations or paraphrases of Genesis. The Bedford Book of Hours (BL Add. Ms. 18 150) c. 1423, for example, narrates nine episodes from the naming of the animals to the exile of Cain within a single miniature (Figure 17.1). As in the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the Early Christian illustrative tradition represented by the Carolingian Genesis frontispieces, an angel rather than the creator expels Adam and Eve from paradise, although he is here identified as the archangel Michael and equipped with fifteenth-century plate armour. In the well-known apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Michael is described as the keeper of the gate of paradise who assured the exiled Adam's son, Seth, that Christ would come and deliver Adam.⁵ As in many later medieval representations, the serpent is shown with a human head, the mirror image of Eve, 'because like attracts like', as Petrus Comestor had explained in the twelfth century, supposedly quoting Bede. This reference has never been traced, but the sixth-century Syriac compilation of earlier materials, the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*, describes the serpent calling Eve by name, 'and when she turned round towards him, she saw her own form reflected in him'.⁶ In addition to these archaeological strata of accumulated extrabiblical details, the miniature in the Bedford Book of Hours also reveals contemporary late medieval preoccupations, for example, with the doctrine of grace and the intermediary role of the Church, reflected in its image of the four rivers of paradise emanating from a baptismal *fons vitae* of truly Gothic cathedral dimensions. In the Early Christian cycle the creator is pictured as the logos; here he is shown as the Trinity, in the Janus-headed figure of the Father and the Son surmounted by the living flame of the Holy Spirit. Two extra scenes are inserted into the Genesis story: the triune creator gazes on the dead body of Adam, exiled from paradise, and bears him up in his arms. Significantly, in this last scene alone, the creator is shown with the single face of the Father and flame of the Spirit, for the logos has put on the form of Adam's flesh and lies in the Father's arms like an image of the Pietà. The prone body of the first Adam shows the death by sin passed upon all men, but he is also, literally, 'the figure of him that was to come'.

4 K. Weitzmann, 'The Genesis Mosaics of San Marco and the Cotton Genesis Miniatures', in O. Demus (ed.), *The Mosaics of San Marco, Venice*, II (4 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 105–43 and nn. 253–37, pls. 107–30.

5 M.R. James (ed.), *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 126–28.

6 E.A. Wallis Budge (trans.), *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1927), p. 64.



Figure 17.1 The Bedford Book of Hours, c. 1423. © The British Library Board. Add. MS 18150, fol. 14.

The gift of grace pours abundantly through the portals of Eden in the paradisaical waters of baptism, [168] signifying death unto sin and the old man, and entry into newness of life. This tableau provides a pictorial meditation on St Paul's view of the Fall and atonement which was of particular interest in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Romans 5:12–15; 6:1–6).

Most medieval pictorial allusions to Eden, however, occur outside the context of Genesis manuscripts or the detailed illustration of the whole story. Freed from even the relative constraints of textual illustration and narrative sequence and seen through the filter of changing contemporary interests, the compelling myth was constantly reformulated, excerpted, juxtaposed with other material and adapted to a wide variety of contexts, as the example of the image of the two trees in Genesis 2:9 may show.

The Tree of Life

The ancient Near Eastern image of the Tree of Life was of a cosmological tree, rooted in the underworld, the trunk passing through the centre of the earth, its

branches reaching to the heavens and supporting the constellations, its fruit offering healing and immortality.⁷ In the Eastern churches in the early Christian centuries, this Tree of Life was readily identified with the cross, and therefore with Christ himself, and the life-giving fruits with the eucharist. Patristic exegesis on the Tree of Life 'in the midst of the garden' (Genesis 2:9) was expanded by apocryphal and legendary materials, some of which appears in the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*:

That tree of life which was in the midst of paradise prefigured the redeeming Cross, which is the veritable Tree of Life, and this it is that was fixed in the middle of the world.⁸

In Jewish cosmology Jerusalem was the centre of the world and the axial tree an image of kingship (Dan. 4:10–14; Ezekiel 17:22–24). The unfading tree with medicinal fruits was also an eschatological image, visualised as planted in the midst of the earth on the right side of the new temple by the waters of life in Ezekiel 47:1,12. Jewish Scripture and legend joined the common Near Eastern myth of the cosmic, life-giving tree to the messianic hope of a return to paradise.⁹ These ideas were taken up by the writer of the Apocalypse in his culminating vision of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly paradise, where the Tree of Life, bearing healing fruits, stands eternally beside the water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb (Revelation 22:1–2). [170]

Christian exegesis of Psalm 73.12 ('For God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth') also helped form the tradition that Jerusalem and its Holy Places commemorating the site of Christ's crucifixion, burial and Resurrection was the very centre of the earth, a tradition quoted by Adomnán of Iona in the late seventh century, and followed by Bede, in recounting the eye-witness description of the Holy Places by the pilgrim Arculf.¹⁰

The apsidal mosaic in the Roman basilica of San Clemente, based on an Early Christian iconographic type of the fifth or sixth century, shows the assimilation

7 G. Widengren, *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism* (1946), p. 157, and *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion*, parts 2 and 4 of *Studies in Manichaean, Mandaean and Syrian Gnostic Religion* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitets årsskrift); E.O. James, *The Tree of Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1966); E.A.S. Butterworth, *The Tree at the Navel of the Earth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970).

8 *Cave of Treasures*, p. 63. For surveys and references to the large primary literature, see E. Greenhill, 'The Child in the Tree: A Study of the Cosmological Tree in Christian Tradition', *Traditio* 10 (1954), pp. 327–71, and G. Ladner, 'Vegetation Symbolism and the Concept of Renaissance', in M. Meiss (ed.), *De artibus opuscula XL: Essays in Honour of Erwin Panofsky* (New York: New York University Press, 1961), pp. 302–22. Also, D.W. Robertson, 'The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens', *Speculum* 26 (1951), pp. 24–49.

9 Z. Ameisenowa, 'The Tree of Life in Jewish Iconography', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1938–39), pp. 330, 334.

10 D. Meehan (ed.), *Adomnán's De Locis Sanctis* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958), p. 56.



Figure 17.2 Apsidal mosaic. San Clemente, Rome. © Basilica di San Clemente (Rome). Used with permission of the Irish Dominican Fathers.

of the Near Eastern image of the Tree of Life to Christian purposes (Figure 17.2). The stylised acanthus vegetation of the world tree spans heaven and earth in vine-like scrolls. Two liturgical lamps flank its main trunk. Men, beasts and birds seek its shade and fruit. The sacrament of baptism is shown by the water of life issuing from the base of the tree/cross in the form of the four rivers of paradise which flowed out of Eden. Thirsting harts, the image of the soul longing for God (Psalm 42:1) and often featured in the decoration of early baptisteries, drink from the water of life. Below them stand the Lamb and the celestial city.¹¹ In a single image the cross, erected on Golgotha in the historical city of Jerusalem at a particular moment in time, is here revealed as the eternal cosmic Tree of Life; prefigured

11 For discussion of the mosaic's inscription see G. Ladner, 'Medieval and Modern Understanding of Symbolism: A Comparison', *Speculum* 54 (1979), p. 237 n. 76. For the detail of the serpent at the foot of the Tree of Life, see R.T. Ettinghausen, 'The Snake-Eating Stag', in Weitzmann, *Medieval Studies*, p. 272.

from the beginning in Eden and finally revealed in all its glory in the heavenly paradise of the New Jerusalem. The liturgical context of the image is important in showing that the fruits of this tree are continually available to the faithful – at the eucharistic altar below the mosaic.

The multi-faceted identity of the Tree of Life was pictorially represented in a great variety of ways. A relief carved on the inside of a sixth-century alabaster throne-shaped reliquary from the eastern Mediterranean shows the Tree of Life with the four paradisaical rivers pouring from the baptismal font at its base.¹² It is attended by the four beasts of the evangelists: as the four rivers of Eden watered the four quarters of the earth so, in exegesis, the four gospels issuing from a single source were seen as watering the whole Church (Figure 17.3). The tree is not simply the Tree of Life in Eden, however. Carved on the sides and the reverse of the throne, the beasts, who are each shown with six wings, also represent the four living creatures who surround the throne of the slain and glorified Lamb in perpetual adoration (Revelation 4:6–8; 5:6–9). The reliquary itself forms the throne of the Lamb. The apparently curious juxtaposition of the tree and four rivers of Eden with the image of the Lamb on the throne results from [171] an imaginative telescoping of three texts. In addition to the imagery of Genesis 2:9–10 and Revelation 4 and 5 already noted, it incorporates the vision of the Tree of Life and water of life proceeding out of the throne of the Lamb in the heavenly paradise in Revelation 22:1–3. The lighted tapers carved on each arm of the throne, flanking the image, probably allude to the divine light accompanying the vision (v. 5). Immediately above this paradisaical and eschatological tree, and identified with it, is the cross. Surmounting the throne and attended by saints, the jewelled cross recalls the commemorative cross clad in precious metal, erected for pilgrims on the cult site of Golgotha at the imagined centre of the earth and echoed in the *exaltatio crucis* depicted on many Early Christian works as a celebration of the exalted body of Christ. It seems probable that a relic of the True Cross was once enthroned in the reliquary whose iconography, function and very shape provide an exposition of the royal *lignum vitae*.

That the exalted body of Christ is to be identified with the Tree of Life (in Eden, on Golgotha and in the heavenly paradise) is graphically demonstrated in an esoteric and archaising miniature following the gospel canon tables in an eleventh-century Reichenau manuscript (Munich, Staatsbibl. Clm. 4454, fol. 20v; Figure 17.4). The tree spans heaven and earth as the universal axis. Christ's body literally forms its entire trunk, his hand grasps its branches. In his other hand he holds an orb and is flanked by classical personifications of the sun and moon, symbols of the centre and of his cosmic sovereignty; they are often included in the iconography of the crucifixion, which is additionally alluded to here by Christ's stance and his outstretched arms. He is, however, 'clothed with a garment down to the foot' as in the opening apocalyptic vision of his glory (Revelation 1:13) and

12 D. Gaborit-Chopin, 'Sedis di San Marco', in *The Treasury of Venice*, Catalogue of British Museum Exhibition (Milan: Olivetti, 1984), cat. 7, pp. 98–105.



Figure 17.3 Throne Reliquary, sixth century. Courtesy of the Procuratoria di San Marco, Venice.

pictured in the midst of the seven-branched tree in a glory of divine light. The tree rises from an Atlas-like but female personification of the waters of the *fons vitae*. Issuing from this single source, the four rivers of Eden are shown at the four corners of the earth. Like caryatids, the personifications of the rivers support the four beasts of the evangelists who all turn towards the central mandorla, as in the traditional iconography of the *Majestas Domini*, showing the four apocalyptic creatures about the divine throne (Revelation 4:5–9). The object of their adoration, Christ ‘enthroned’ on the Tree of Life above the water of life, recalls the further eschatological image of Revelation 22:1–3. The paradoxical concept of the crucified reigning from the tree was familiar from Fortunatus’s Good Friday hymn, *Pange lingua*, which [174] incorporates the line ‘Regnavit a ligno Deus’ from the Old Latin text of Psalms 95:10.

The Tree of Life is depicted in the common Near Eastern tradition, symmetrically flanked by beasts and birds, on the eighth-century Lombardic relief in the cathedral at Cividale (Figure 17.5). The sacramental nature of its fruits is indicated, however, by the bunches of grapes on which the birds in its branches feed, and the waters of baptism issuing from the base of the paradisaical Tree of Life are



Figure 17.4 Reichenau, Gospel Book, eleventh century. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Clm 4454, fol. 20v.

suggested not only by the four beasts of the evangelists shown at the four corners of the design, but by the presence of the baptismal font below the stone canopy on which the relief is carved. Again, the liturgical context and function of the work of art is an integral part of its iconography. The Tree of Life is shown as the axis of the universe, continued into the upper register of the relief and there explicitly revealed as the cross, attended by two large candlesticks. It is also flanked by two small identical trees. They may serve to identify the cross with the Tree of Life not only in Eden but in the heavenly paradise, where it is rather ambiguously described in twofold aspect planted either side of the river of the water of life (Revelation 22:2). The tenth-century Byzantine ivory Harbaville triptych also shows the cross in a paradisaical setting and flanked by two small identical trees, with the additional significant detail that each tree is wreathed with grape-bearing vines on which birds feed.¹³ The ivory thereby incorporates elements from both

13 Paris, Louvre; G. Schiller, *Ikongraphie der Christlichen Kunst*, III (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966), pl. 550; Cividale relief, pl. 552.



Figure 17.5 Lombardic relief, eighth century. Cividale Cathedral baptistery.

registers of the Cividale relief (the paradisal tree with birds eating its grapes and the cross flanked by two small trees) to suggest in a single image the cross as the Tree of Life in both the earthly and heavenly paradise.

Far more usually in the Middle Ages, the revelation of the identity of the cross as the Tree of Life was made in the context of the crucifixion itself by simply depicting the cross with stylised foliage. This represents an abbreviation of the fuller iconography of the tree and waters of life, incorporated in some of the earliest depictions of the crucifixion. Sixth-century pilgrims' ampullae from the Holy Land, bearing the legend 'Oil from the Tree of Life', had shown the cross as a stylised tree between the two thieves and the Virgin and St John. The tree/cross is on a mound from which the four paradisal rivers flow and is sometimes additionally accompanied by two small trees. Christ is not shown on the cross but in a portrait bust above it to suggest the identification of the Tree of Life with the glorified Lord. In some ampullae, his standing orant body actually replaces the [176] vegetal cross in the crucifixion scene.¹⁴ A constant feature of the different versions of this iconography is that the tree/cross is shown directly over a scene of the empty sepulchre, which is fashioned after the church of the Anastasis at the centre of the earth. In a masterly study, Paul Underwood showed the complex

14 A. Grabar, *Les Ampoules de Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1958), pls. 14, 16, 18, 22, 24, 39.

role of this architectural model in the iconography of the baptismal Fountain of Life, which developed separately from images of the Tree of Life, although many Eastern representations of the *fons vitae* retain the two small flanking trees associated with the *lignum vitae*.¹⁵ Two Carolingian versions show an eight-columned font, surmounted by a canopy and a small gold cross. In the St Médard Gospels, four harts surround the font, which is supplied from a central fountain through four water spouts, thereby indicating the four rivers of paradise springing, like the four gospels, from a single source. In the earlier version in the Godescalc Evangelistary of c. 781–83, the liturgical lamps suspended from the *fons vitae* and the confronted beasts and birds who browse on the vegetation stemming from it, preserve clearer reminiscences of the Early Christian Tree of Life iconography.¹⁶

The separate development of the iconography of the *fons vitae* was to be largely continued in the later Middle Ages, as the Bedford Book of Hours lavishly demonstrates (Figure 17.1). The cross was still revealed as the cosmological, light-bearing tree with life-giving fruits but was combined with typological material rather than the four rivers of paradise, and set within the emotive devotional context of a crucifixion iconography which emphasised Christ's slumped dead body and the grieving figures of the Virgin and St. John. The Society of Antiquaries' Psalter of Robert of Lindsey, Abbot of Peterborough, c. 1220, for example, shows the cross sprouting verdant foliage in bearing as its fruit the body of Christ (Figure 17.6). It spans heaven and earth, sun and moon are poised above its branches and it is set against the golden background of eternity. Formally, it divides contrasted scenes, marking the passing of the old dispensation (represented by roundels of Moses and the figure of Synagoga with the tablets of the Law on Christ's left) and the consummation of the new dispensation (shown in the roundels of St Peter and Ecclesia with a chalice on Christ's right).

The influential mid-thirteenth-century treatise *Lignum vitae* by St Bonaventure systematically identifies Christ with the Tree of Life, of Eden, Golgotha and the New Jerusalem, but the traditional imagery is transformed by contemporary Franciscan spirituality. The fruits of [178] this tree are 'tasted' in the form of a series of affective meditations, particularly on the humanity and Passion of Christ, designed to stir the individual reader's love and compassion. The treatise was rendered into simplified diagrammatic form and frequently reproduced, often separated from its text.¹⁷ The elaborate early fourteenth-century version by Pacino de Bonaguida in the Accademia in Florence shows Christ dead on the cross, which is seen as an enormous twelve-branched Tree of Life (Revelation 22:2) spanning not only all

15 P. Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950), pp. 43–138, at 99–106.

16 Underwood, 'Fountain of Life', pp. 73–74, pls. 25, 26.

17 S. Bonaventura, *Opera Omnia*, VIII (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1898), pp. 68ff. For later versions of the *Lignum vitae* diagram, see F. Saxl, 'A Spiritual Encyclopaedia of the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942), pp. 109, 111–13, pls. 27b, 28.



Figure 17.6 Psalter of Robert of Lindsey, c. 1220. © The Society of Antiquaries of London.

space but all time, from the earthly paradise depicted by the detailed scenes of the creation of Adam and Eve, the Fall and Expulsion at the base of the cosmic tree at the centre of the earth, to the heavenly paradise at its summit (Figure 17.7). The host-shaped fruit on each of its branches enclose pictorial meditations on scenes of Christ's life, Passion and glorification, shown in chronologically ascending order. The tree therefore chronicles man's long exile from paradise and the means of his return – by God's descent at the Incarnation. In the scene of the Annunciation, the Christ-child is shown already bearing his cross. The fruit provides the soul with spiritual food, and the rung-like branches form a means of ascent, the way of the cross, for the individual's spiritual journey to paradise.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

The concept of the antithetical relationship of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and of their inextricable connection within the divinely ordered plan of salvation, was familiar from exegesis, liturgy and the



Figure 17.7 Pacino di Bonaguida, *Lignum vitae*, early fourteenth century. Reproduced with permission from Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze.

Holy Cross hymns.¹⁸ These ideas were taken up in Western art rather late, however. Carolingian crucifixion iconography commonly indicates Christ's conquest of death by showing a serpent beneath his feet, actually coiled round the cross, sometimes combined with scenes of the Resurrection of the dead. But full allusion to the Fall was only developed within crucifixion iconography during the tenth century.

The legend, repeated from the time of Julius Africanus, that the skull of Adam was buried at Golgotha was reflected in the Byzantine practice of depicting a skull at the foot of the cross. The tradition recorded in the *Book of the Cave of Treasures* describes the eventual burial of Adam's embalmed body at Golgotha, the place where the four quarters of the earth meet; the *Book of Adam and Eve* tells of the divine promise, 'I shall shed my blood upon thy head in the land [180]

18 Ladner, 'Vegetative Symbolism and the Concept of Renaissance', p. 312. J. Szoverffy, 'Crux Fidelis: Prolegomena to a History of the Holy Cross Hymns', *Traditio* 22 (1966), pp. 1–41.

of Golgotha. For my blood shall be the water of life unto thee'.¹⁹ In the Beatus Apocalypse of Gerona, c. 975, a conventionally shaped cross is revealed as the light-bearing Tree of Life: tufts of foliage are roughly etched on its lower shaft and it is attended by liturgical lamps beside the figures of sun and moon.²⁰ It rises from the closed and labelled tomb of the shrouded body of Adam (Plate 17.1). Christ's blood does not here flow directly onto Adam but into the eucharistic chalice on the shaft of the tree/cross. A late tenth-century embossed book cover from the Rhineland shows a scene of the Fall in miniature below the crucifixion. The cross is not depicted as a tree, but the serpent is coiled around its lower shaft which is flanked by Adam and Eve. Again, the chalice on the cross beneath Christ's feet indicates the eucharistic fruit of the Tree of Life. A variant in the late tenth-century Fulda sacramentary has the additional detail of showing Adam and Eve not only flanking the serpent-entwined lower shaft of the cross, but standing in their tombs.²¹ At one level they may be read as being consigned to death at the Fall, but the presence of other figures below the cross rising from their tombs suggests the general resurrection to new life. Explicit typological pairing of the *lignum scientiae* and the cross is uncommon in early medieval art but does appear in the context of an elaborate exposition of the Fall and Redemption on the great bronze doors cast for the abbey church of St Michael at Hildesheim, c. 1015. Probably based on an Early Christian Genesis cycle via a Carolingian intermediary, the left-hand door recounts the events of Genesis 2:21–4:8, from the creation of Eve to the death of Abel, in eight panels in descending order.²² The right-hand door shows the return to paradise by picturing, in ascending order, scenes of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection. Among the many correspondences made horizontally between the old and new creation on the two doors is the juxtaposition of the Fall and Crucifixion. Adam and Eve flank the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, whose central position in the panel is mirrored by that of the cross in the adjacent scene. The cross is edged with stylised foliage to show it is the Tree of Life.

From the twelfth century there were many variations on these themes which were readily adapted to the changes in spirituality, sensibility and style evident in the later medieval iconography of the crucifixion. The fourteenth-century Psalter of Robert de Lisle, for example, depicts a crucifixion whose most memorable feature is the affective image of Christ's bleeding and twisted body hanging dead on [182] the cross and mourned by the Virgin and St John, but the tiny

19 *Cave of Treasures*, pp. 126; 224; S.C. Malan (trans.), *The Book of Adam and Eve* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1882), p. 45. For legendary materials about the Garden of Eden, see G. Every, *Christian Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1970), pp. 50–63.

20 Gerona Cathedral, ms 7, fol. 16v; J. Williams, *Early Spanish Manuscript Illumination* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977), p. 97, pl. 29. The miniature also uses the Eastern apocryphal tradition of naming the two thieves at the crucifixion.

21 Säckingen, Stiftskirche St Fridolin; Göttingen, Univ. Bib. Cod. theol. 231, fol. 60v; Schiller, *Ikonographie*, II, pls. 370, 381.

22 Kessler, *Illustrated Bibles*, p. 27, pl. 5.



Plate 17.1 Beatus Apocalypse, c. 975. Capitol Cathedral of Girona. MS 7, fol. 16v.

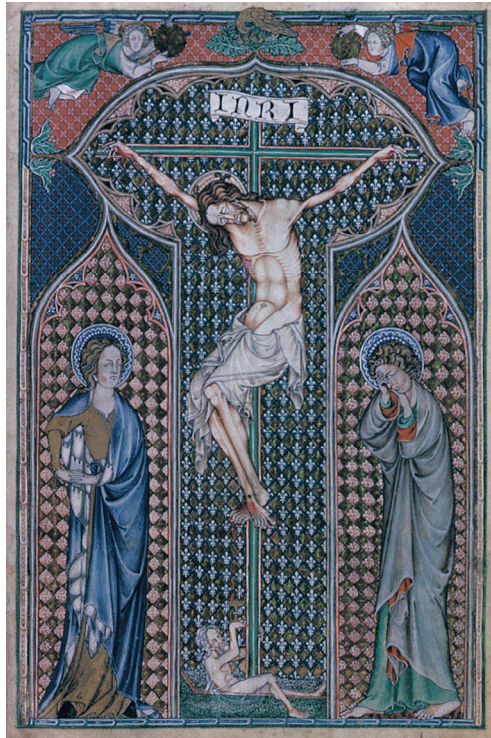


Figure 17.8 Psalter of Robert of Lisle, early fourteenth century. © The British Library Board. Arundel MS 83 II, fol. 132.

clusters of foliage at the terminals of the cross also reveal that it is the Tree of Life (Figure 17.8).²³ It stems from the tomb of Adam who, in rising to receive the fruit of the redeeming tree in a chalice, suggests the continuing means of salvation offered mankind through the sacrament.

The Jewish apocryphal story of Seth journeying to paradise seeking the oil of mercy was, in its Latin form, assimilated to the earliest Christianised version of the story in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.²⁴ Combined with the legends of the Holy Cross, this material became popular through the Golden Legend and in later medieval vernacular literature, and was pictorially narrated in selected episodes in a range of places and media: in the fresco cycles of Agnolo Gaddi in the choir of Santa Croce, Florence, c. 1380 and of Piero della Francesca at Arezzo, c. 1452–66; in

23 BL, Arundel 83 II, fol. 132; L. Freeman Sandler, *The Psalter of Robert de Lisle* (London: Harvey Miller/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pl. 17.

24 James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 126–28; E. Quinn, *The Quest of Seth for the Oil of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 88–101.

Catherine of Cleves's Book of Hours, c. 1440; and in various northern woodcut cycles. It is, however, difficult to discern the specific influence on later medieval crucifixion iconography of this composite legend. In exegesis, the cross was seen as being *mystically* prefigured by the Tree of Life in Eden. The composite legend told of its *material* construction from wood ultimately derived from the seeds or shoots taken from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and planted on Adam's grave by his son Seth. In the fourteenth century, the legend was combined with the motif of the dry, dead timbers of the cross bursting into leaf on bearing Christ at the crucifixion, thereby alluding to the apocryphal story that the *lignum scientiae* had withered when its fatal fruit was taken at the Fall.²⁵

The representation of the cross as made of two roughly hewn timbers or tree trunks, which was widely popular from the twelfth century, particularly in English art, has been interpreted as directly derived from this apocryphal material.²⁶ However, the Holy Cross legends do not specify that the wood of the cross was roughly lopped and, moreover, the image of the lopped timber cross appears five times in late Anglo-Saxon art, already with considerable variety, and even earlier on the continent in the Carolingian ivory mounted on the cover of Henry II's Book of Pericopes.²⁷ All these examples pre-date the earliest extant combination, in the twelfth century, of the originally separate early legends of the vision of Seth and the History of the Holy Cross. The composite legend explains the startling paradox of death overcome by death at the crucifixion by showing with concrete and circumstantial detail that the tree of death (i.e. the Tree of the [184] Knowledge of Good and Evil) literally became the very instrument of salvation. The iconography of the lopped timber cross instead gives symbolic expression to this profound theological mystery. Two mid-thirteenth-century English psalters depict such a cross, starkly emphasising the suffering and death of Christ hanging from its gaunt timbers. However, although stripped of foliage like a dead tree, the true identity of this roughly hewn, man-made gibbet is revealed through the rest of the iconography. The Evesham Psalter version shows that although the timbers seem dead, they are green, that the cross rises from the mound conventionally denoting the rock of Golgotha at the mid-point of the earth, that its hacked terminals penetrate the limits of the miniature's margins to show it is the cosmological tree (Figure 17.9). It is attended by angels and the sun and moon. In addition to showing such attributes of the Tree of Life and cosmic sovereignty, the variant in the Amesbury Psalter includes a tiny scene of the Father and Holy Spirit above

25 M.R. Bennett, 'The Green Tree and the Dry Tree', *Archaeological Journal* 83 (1926), pp. 21–32; Ladner, 'Medieval and Modern', pp. 309–11; R.E. Kaske, 'A Poem of the Cross in the Exeter Book: Riddle 60', and 'The Husband's Message', *Traditio* 23 (1967), pp. 41–71 and 65–66; Greenhill, 'Child in the Tree', pp. 354–57.

26 W.L. Hildburgh, 'A Medieval Bronze Pectoral Cross', *Art Bulletin* 14 (1932), pp. 79–102 and 90–97.

27 J. O'Reilly, 'The Rough-hewn Cross in Anglo Saxon Art', in M. Ryan (ed.), *Ireland and Insular Art 500–1200* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987), pp. 153–58.



Figure 17.9 Evesham Psalter, c. 1250–60. © The British Library Board. Add. MS 44874, fol. 6.

Christ, revealing the crucifixion as the work of the Trinity, and the figure of Adam and other resurrected souls rising from their tombs below the tree, restored by its life-giving fruit. The sacramental nature of that fruit is shown in the figure of Ecclesia with a chalice, standing to Christ's right and superseding the old covenant of the Synagogue, shown to his left.²⁸

The two trees

From the early twelfth century there was an astonishing proliferation of variations on the Tree of Life image, often incorporating other iconographic or thematic components, with frequent cross-fertilisation between didactic and devotional modes. One feature of these later medieval developments was the recurring attempt to

28 BL, Add. Ms 44874, fol. 6 and Oxford, All Souls Coll. Ms 6, fol. 5, reproduced in D.H. Turner, *Early Gothic Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: British Museum, 1965), pls. 1, 10.

show not simply the polarity, or even the causative relationship between the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the cross, but to present the dry Tree of Death and the green Tree of Life within an integrated image which would have a direct application to the spiritual life of the individual soul. Particularly during the fifteenth century, such images also strongly asserted the role of the Church in the spiritual life. Three of the many strands in a complex process may be briefly indicated. First, the traditional typological relationship between Synagoga and Ecclesia, representing the old and new covenants and often depicted by personifications flanking the cross, became associated with the image of two trees bearing the contrasted fruits of the flesh and the [186] spirit. Secondly, the image of the trees of the old and the new Adam, deceptively similar yet again with contrasted fruits, was often used as a mnemonic diagram on which to hang classifications of the Vices and Virtues so widely featured in later medieval teaching and penitential materials. Finally, elements of these two iconographic traditions were variously assimilated to two absorbing later medieval interests, the cult of Mary and the concern with the role of freewill and grace in the salvation process. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, new and eventually irreconcilable images of contrasted trees were produced from either side of the Reformation divide, one showing the first and second Eve, the other the rule of Law and Grace.²⁹

Two small identical trees accompany the crucifixion scene on the Alton Towers altarpiece, c. 1150, but, instead of immediately flanking it, as in the Eastern iconography of the Tree of Life, they are relegated to the side margins, to the position sometimes taken by figures of Ecclesia and Synagoga.³⁰ In the context of the exclusively typological scenes surrounding the crucifixion on this Mosan work, it is possible that the trees may have carried the connotations of Church and Synagogue for contemporaries. In a glass panel from St Germer-de-Fly, Beauvais, c. 1170–80, two such trees flanking the crucifixion are combined with contrasted figures of Ecclesia and Synagoga, Fides and Infidelitas.³¹ Half a century or so earlier, the *Liber floridus* of St Omer, Ghent, c. 1120, had contrasted the fruit of two similarly shaped trees which are explicitly captioned *arbor bona-Ecclesia*

29 Some of these developments are discussed in more detail in J. O'Reilly, *Studies in the Iconography of the Virtues and Vices* (New York: Garland, 1988), pp. 323–434.

30 J. Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), pl. 168. As early as c. 1000–25, the Uta Codex from St Emmeram, Regensburg, had shown Ecclesia and Synagoga so positioned in the margins to Christ's right and left, with personifications of Vita and Mors immediately flanking him (Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art*, pl. 97).

31 L. Grodecki, 'Les Vitraux de XIIe siècle de S Germer-de-Fly', in P. Bloch and J. Hoster (eds.), *Miscellanea Pro Arte: Hermann Schnitzler zur Vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres* (Düsseldorf: Schriften des Pro Arte Medii Aevi no. 1, 1965), pp. 149–57. For a further example of the association of trees and Ecclesia and Synagoga, see H. Tourbet, 'Une fresque de San Pedro de Sorie (Catalogne) et le thème iconographique de l'arbor bona-ecclesia, arbor mala-synagoga', *Cahiers Archéologiques* 19 (1969), pp. 167–89, fig. 2.

and *arbor mala-Synagoga* (Figure 17.10).³² They appear on the spectator's left and right respectively in a double-page image; the arrangement is that of Ecclesia and Synagoga in crucifixion iconography (i.e. to Christ's right and left). The burgeoning *arbor bona* bears twelve variegated fruits, alluding to the Tree of Life in Revelation 22:2 and labelled as the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22–24. The *arbor mala* is of identical shape but barren of leaves and with withered figs identified as the fruits of the flesh. The cursing of the unfruitful fig tree in Matthew 21:19 is recalled and the axes laid at the root of the *arbor mala* hint at other literary origins of the image: John the Baptist's sermon on repentance, warning of the fire and axe awaiting 'every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit' (Matthew 3:10), repeated in Matthew 7:16–20, 'Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them'. Certainly, the artist was familiar with the image of the hewn cosmic royal tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 4:10–15) which is separately represented among the *Liber floridus*'s many tree and plant diagrams. Psalm 1 provides the [188] classic text for likening the good man to 'a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf shall not wither'. In both Jewish and Christian exegesis this tree was interpreted as the paradisaical Tree of Life.³³ The *arbor bona-Ecclesia* in the *Liber floridus* may be seen as both the spiritual life of the good man and the Tree of Life identified with the mystical body of Christ, his Church, in whom the fruits of the spirit are perfected.

The treatise *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*, once ascribed to Hugo of St Victor but now thought originally to have formed part of the *Speculum Virginum* attributed to the Benedictine Conrad of Hirsau, is illustrated with a diagram of two contrasted trees in a Leipzig manuscript of c. 1133;³⁴ it appears in a more developed form in a version at Salzburg (Figure 17.11, Figure 17.12) and in a copy of the *Speculum Virginum* of c. 1140.³⁵ The diagram probably had even earlier anteced-

32 Ghent, Bibl. de L'Université et de La Ville, Ms 16, fols. 231v–232; facsimile ed. E.A. Derolez (Ghent, 1973); A. Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art* (London, 1939; repr. New York: Norton, 1964), pp. 63–67, pls. 64–65. L. Behling, 'Ecclesia als Arbor Bona', *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft* 13 (1959), pp. 139–54.

33 M. Smith, 'The Image of God – Notes on the Hellenization of Judaism', *BJRL* 40 (1958), p. 506; K.A. Wirth, 'Notes on Some Didactic Illustrations in the Margins of a Twelfth Century Psalter', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970), p. 26. Christ is seen as the *lignum quod plantum est* in the commentaries of Jerome, Ambrose, Hilary, Augustine and Cassiodorus. One of the earliest Western illustrations of Ps. 1.3 shows Christ on the cross: the Stuttgart psalter c. 820, Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibl., Biblia folia 23, fol. 2r; facsimile ed. E.T. de Wald, *The Stuttgart Psalter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1930), p. 7.

34 Leipzig UB 148, fols. 113v–114r; E.S. Greenhill, 'Die Stellung der Handschrift British Museum Arundel 44 in der Überlieferung des *Speculum Virginum*' (Munich: Grabmann-Institut, 1966), pls. 13–14. R. Bultot, 'L'auteur et la fonction littéraire du *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 30 (1963), pp. 148–54. The treatise is published among the works of Hugo of St Victor in J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1880).

35 Salzburg Studienbibl. ms. Sign. V.I.H 162, fols. 75v–76r, reproduced in Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories*, pls. 66–67. A. Watson ('The *Speculum Virginum*', *Speculum* 3 [1928], pp. 445–69) discusses BL, Arundel 44 where the Trees of Vices and Virtues on fols. 28v–29 appear in the context of

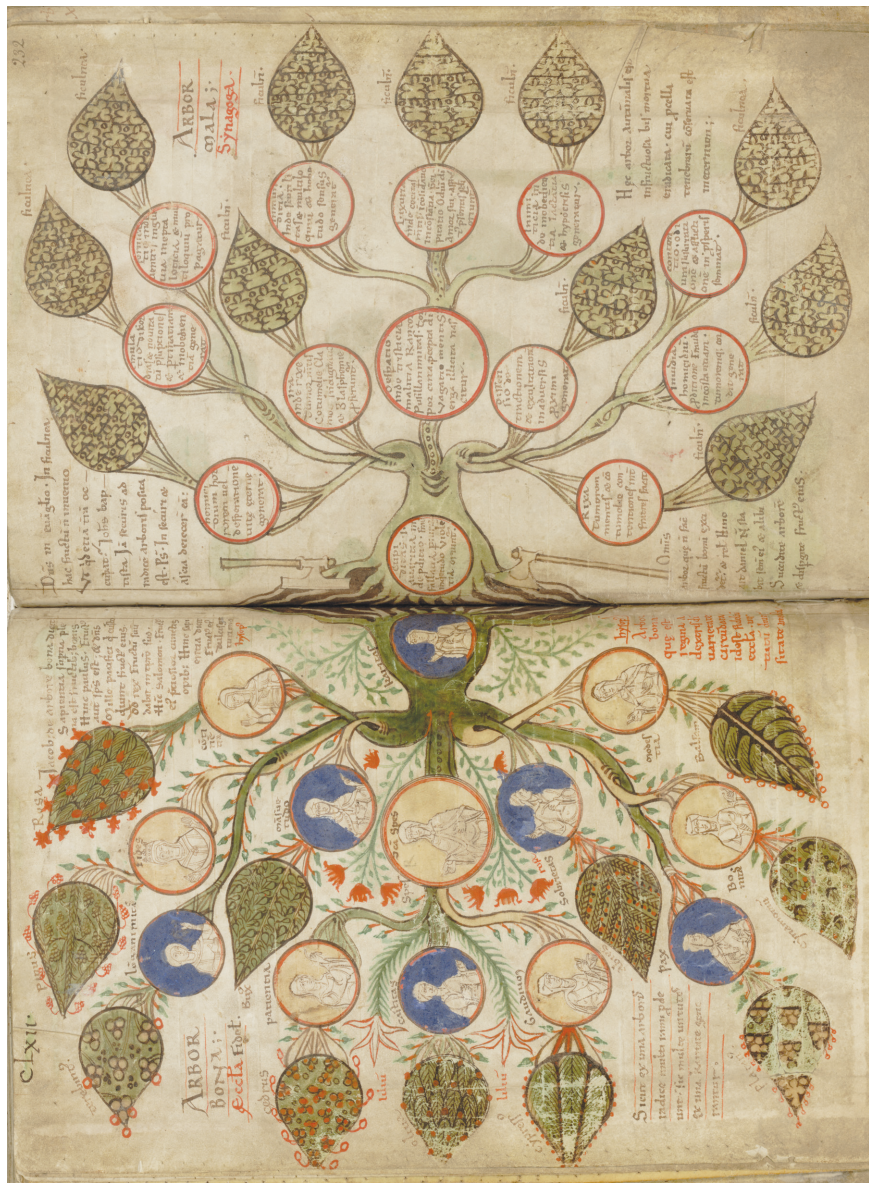


Figure 17.10 *Liber floridus*, c. 1120. Ghent University Library, BHSL.HS.0092, fols. 231v–232r.

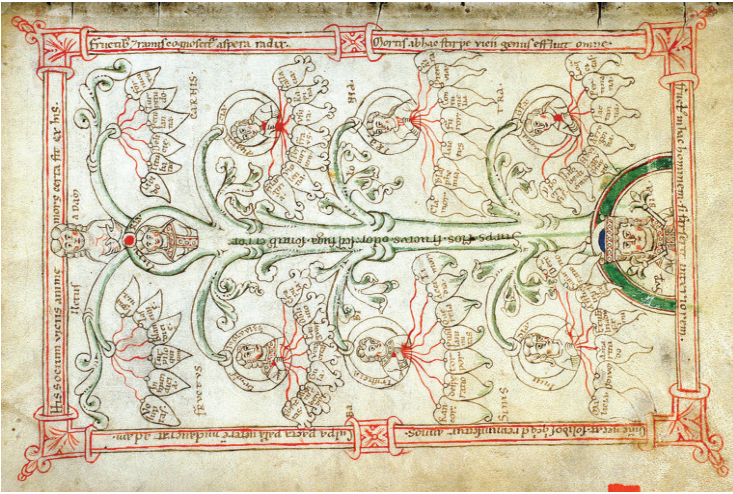


Figure 17.11 *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*, c. 1140. Universitätsbibliothek, Salzburg. MS Sign. M I 32, fol. 75v.

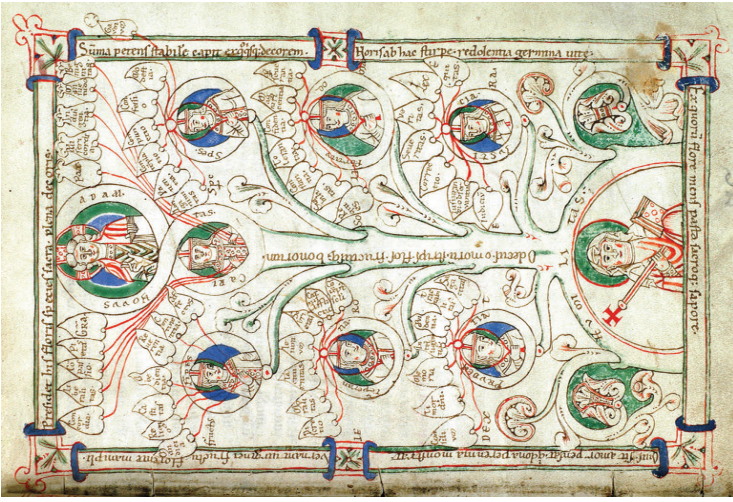


Figure 17.12 *De fructibus carnis et spiritus*, c. 1140. Universitätsbibliothek, Salzburg. MS Sign. M I 32, fol. 76r.

ents and rapidly became detached from the treatise to be repeatedly copied and modified throughout the later Middle Ages. The two trees are presented as mirror images, except that the branches of the Tree of Vices droop downwards. Rooted in Superbia, it bears the bitter *fructus carnis*, here identified as the seven deadly sins, and an image of the Vetus Adam lodges in the topmost bough. Across the page is a tree rooted in Humilitas and bearing the four cardinal and three theological virtues as its *fructus spiritus*. Surmounted by the figure of the Novus Adam, its fruits offer spiritual food and grow from seven branches, with three pairs arranged like rungs to provide a spiritual ascent through the graded hierarchy of the virtues. Some manuscripts show a serpent around the Tree of Vices emphasising its allusion to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.³⁶ The version in the fourteenth-century Psalter of Robert de Lisle omits the Vetus Adam and shows the tree, labelled *via mortis*, flanked by Adam and Eve as if at the Fall (Plate 17.2). At the foot of the opposing Tree of Virtues is Mary at the Annunciation.³⁷

The later medieval interest in pairing scenes of the Fall and Annunciation, and of contrasting Eve and Mary, was to be combined with the image of the contrasted fruit of two trees outside the context of the mnemonic diagrams of the contrasted fruits of the flesh and the spirit, Vices and Virtues, Synagoga and Ecclesia to which it is clearly indebted. Various elements of this eclectic iconography, particularly developed in southern Germany in the later fifteenth century, are anticipated in an illustration to *De laudibus sanctae crucis* from the Benedictine Regensburg house of St Emmeram, c. 1170–85.³⁸ [190]

In the top register of the miniature the Creator-Logos confronts Adam and Eve hiding their shame; however, in the juxtaposed scene, he greets the new Eve, Mary, who is shown already overcoming the serpent with the standard of the cross, an iconography recalling the Annunciation (Figure 17.13). The central register shows Adam and Eve wearing their aprons (i.e. after the Fall). Eve still points to the

related images of the Tree of Jesse, the Tower of Wisdom and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the *scala paradisi*. For the perpetuation and elaboration of these tree diagrams, see Saxl, 'Spiritual Encyclopedia', pp. 107–17.

36 Das Historische Archiv der Stadt Köln, ms W. Fol. 276, fols. 11v–12r, reproduced in M.W. Evans, *Medieval Drawings* (London: Hamlyn, 1969), pls. 72–73. Late fifteenth-century editions of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* depict the Fall, with exemplifications at the seven deadly sins in the branches of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; illustrated in S.C. Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), fig. 1.

37 BL, Arundel ms 83 II, fols. 128v–129r. The Trees of Vices and Virtues are here included among the diagrams of the late thirteenth-century Franciscan collection *Speculum Theologie*, which also shows the related diagram of the Bonaventuran *Lignum Vitae*. The Psalter depicts the crucifixion on the Tree of Life growing from the grave of Adam. See Freeman Sandler, *Psalter*, pp. 23–25, pls. 8–9, 14, 17.

38 Munich, Bayer, Staatsbibl. Cod. lat. 14159, fol. 1r; E. Guldán, *Eva und Maria, eine Antithese als Bildmotiv* (Graz-Köln: Hermann Böhlhaus, 1966), pp. 90–91, 178, pl. 38. The text and inscriptions on the miniature already refer to the mystery of the cross *ante legem, sub lege, usque ad gratiam* and associate the theme with the Church and the Jews; these ideas were to be greatly elaborated in the subsequent iconography of the contrasted fruit of the two trees.

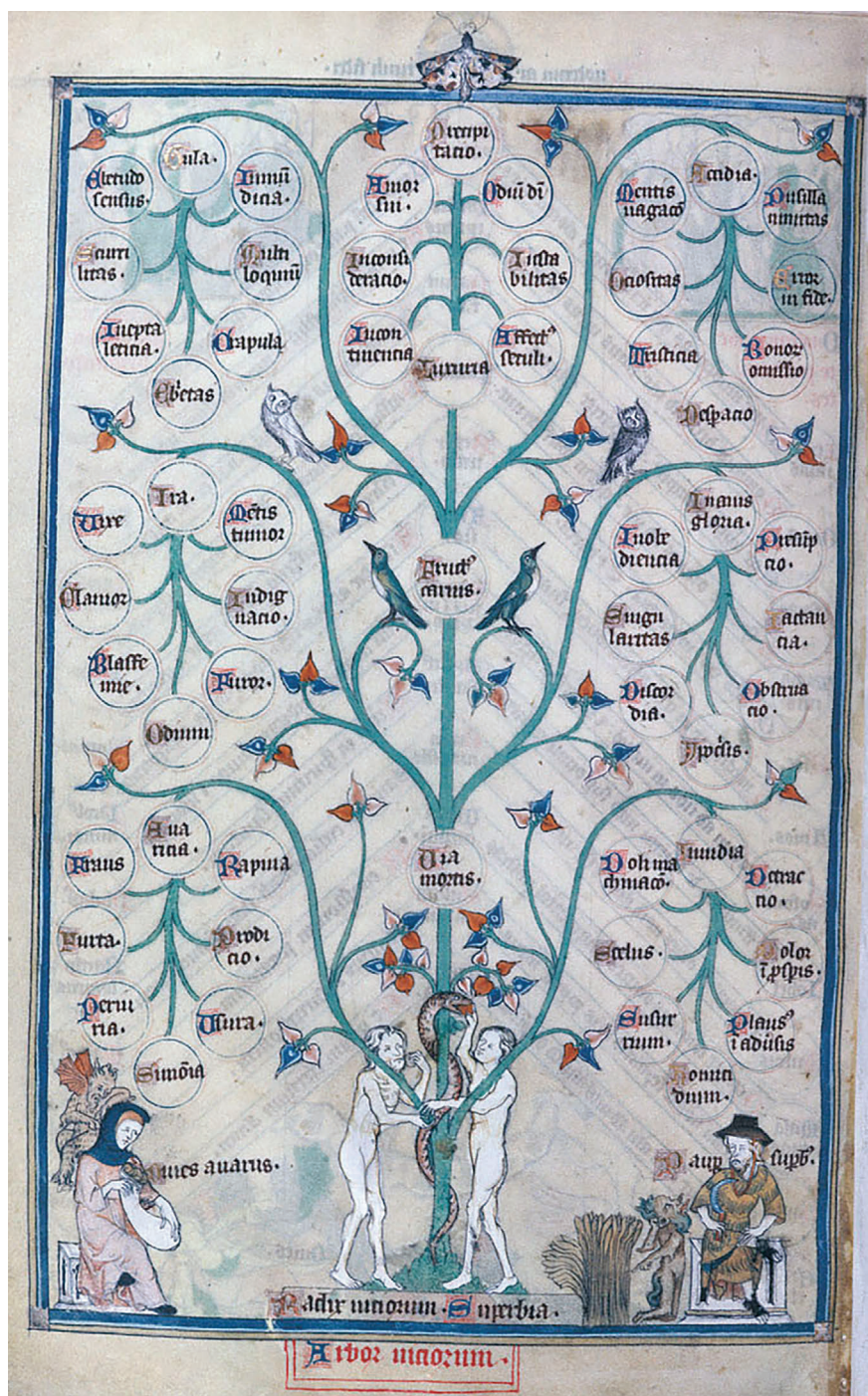


Plate 17.2 Psalter of Robert of Lisle. Tree of Vices. © The British Library Board. Arundel MS 83 II, fol. 128v.



Figure 17.13 *De laudibus sanctae crucis*, c. 1170–85. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München. Clm 14159, fol. 1r.

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but Adam is in the act of turning from it towards the Tree of Life, here represented by a large cross sprouting tendrils of foliage and flanked by two small trees and held by the cruciform figure of Ecclesia. This is not a textual illustration of Genesis; rather, it shows the continuing temptation to eat of the tree of sin and death which prompts the old Adam in every man still, and the continuing invitation offered by the Church to taste the good fruits of the Tree of Life. The lower register makes explicit the sacramental nature of those fruits by depicting the sacrifice and death of Abel, a common type of the eucharist.

During the fifteenth century there were a number of experiments to crystallise such a theological programme around a unified image of the first and second Eve receiving contrasted fruits, sometimes from two separate, apparently identical little trees shown at the extremities of a crucifixion scene including figures of Ecclesia and Synagoga.³⁹ Sometimes the image omitted the crucifixion and showed a single

39 Austrian woodcut, c. 1460/70; Guldán, *Eva und Maria*, pp. 138, 220, pl. 154; illuminated initial in a Gradual produced for Katherine Adelmann, the reforming abbess of the Karissenkloster, Munich,

central tree with divided trunk, or two intertwined stocks, with members of Ecclesia and Synagoga accompanying Mary and Eve respectively on either side.⁴⁰ Mary is shown on the spectator's left in all such images, reflecting the iconographic tradition of showing Ecclesia to Christ's right (and hence the spectator's left) in crucifixion iconography. The most ingenious pictorial solution, though not without some theological ambiguity, is the famous miniature by Berthold Furtmeyer in the missal produced for the Archbishop of Salzburg in 1481 (Figure 17.14).⁴¹ Set within a rose-briar roundel and above scenes of the announcement of the Incarnation to the shepherds, the two Eves flanking a single central undivided tree are shown in pose and feature as mirror images of each other. From beneath a miniature crucifix in the leafy boughs of the tree Mary plucks a fruit. It is a host which, in her role as Ecclesia, she administers, priest-like, to the faithful souls kneeling beside her. In the branches on the other side of the tree is a death's head. Eve plucks her fruit from this side, but receives it directly from the jaws of the serpent coiled round the trunk of the tree. She dispenses it to those who attend her. The transformation of [193] the Garden of Eden scene to contrast two communions is explained by the context of the miniature which forms the missal's frontispiece for Corpus Christi. In the gospel for the feast, Christ contrasts himself, the bread of life, with the manna which Moses gave the Israelites of old (John 6:31–35); exegesis of the passage contrasted the fatal food Eve devoured and the life-giving food Mary offers. Jerome's familiar tag of 'Death through Eve, life through Mary' is evoked in the figure of Death lurking to devour Eve's followers. Death's banderole is inscribed *Mors est malis, vita bonis*, while the angel behind Mary's followers holds a banner *Ecce panis angelorum factus cibus viatorum*, lines from Thomas Aquinas's sequence for Corpus Christi. The hymn is full of the imagery of the living bread, and the Epistle for the day is St Paul's account of the eucharist, with a warning against receiving it unworthily (I Corinthians 11:23–29). The related passage in I Corinthians 5:5–8 also uses the image of the old leaven contrasted with Christ the new Passover and associates it with the theme of the destruction of the flesh and the salvation of the spirit. In Furtmeyer's miniature, Adam is slumped at the foot of the tree and bound to it by the coils of the serpent. Fruit like that plucked by Eve lies beneath his hand. But he is not dead. He is an Everyman figure, the old Adam, continually being invited to turn from his sin and receive instead the fruit of the Tree of Life, dispensed by the Church.

c. 1494–97, in *Bayers Kirche Mittelalter Handschriften und Urkunden* (Catalogue, Munich, 1960), cat. 78, pl. 161.

40 Frescoes of Giovanni de Modena in the chapel of St Georgio, Bologna, S. Petronio; Bible of Johannes von Zittau, Breslau Staatsbibl. Cod. M 1006, fol. 3v in Guldán, *Eva und Maria*, pls. 152–53, 156. The Bible Moralisée of c. 1240 had contrasted Eve receiving the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil with Mary receiving the Christ-child from on high at the Annunciation; this theme crystallised around a central undivided tree with Eve and the New Eve either side, in The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves, c. 1440, Guldán, *Eva und Maria*, pls. 30, 157.

41 Munich, Bayer, Staatsbibl. Cod. lat. 15710, fols. 5–60v; Guldán, *Eva und Maria*, frontispiece.



Figure 17.14 Berthold Furtmeyer, Missal for the Archbishop of Salzburg, c. 1481. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München. Clm 15710, fol. 60v.

The image received increasingly elaborate mariological embellishments during the remaining years of the fifteenth century and in the early sixteenth, but within the same generation, members of Martin Luther's circle at Wittenberg modified it in a rather different way. In 1529 a particularly influential version appeared on a painted altarpiece from the Cranach workshops.⁴² Variations of this composition circulated in Lutheran books and altar panels from the early 1520s. Altdorfer's woodcut for the title page of Luther's New Testament in Low German, prepared by Johann Bugenhagen and published at Lubeck in 1533, is a refined and literary version for a theologically informed audience (Figure 17.15).⁴³ Like the Cranach altarpiece it is an eclectic image, dominated by a central composite tree, leafy boughs on the spectator's right, barren branches on the left. In this, it follows the arrangement of the long tradition of the Trees of Vices and Virtues, rather

42 Gotha, Landesmuseum, M. Friedlander and J. Rosenberg, *Die Gemälde von Lucas Cranach* (Berlin, 1932), p. 64, pl. 183; Schiller, *Ikographie*, II, pls. 533–34.

43 Nurnberg, Germ. Nat. Mus., Inv. Nr. Bl. 308, Schiller, *Ikographie*, II, pl. 538.



Figure 17.15 Erhard Altdorfer. Title page to Luther's New Testament. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Rar. 868.

than that of the *Liber floridus* and the iconography of Ecclesia and Synagoga. On either side of the central axis there are contrasted pairs of scenes in three registers. The realignment of familiar components and the omission of others marks a radical departure from the [196] medieval tradition of contrasting Ecclesia and Synagoga, Life and Death, either side of the crucifixion in which the cross was sometimes explicitly revealed as the Tree of Life. It also differs from the image of the central composite tree with contrasted fruits as it had been formulated outside the context of crucifixion iconography in the late fifteenth century, although it patently deals with some of that period's theological preoccupations.

In Altdorfer's design, the customary contrast between the first and second Eve is omitted; the emphasis is instead on the first and second Adam in the closely paired scenes of the Fall and Crucifixion in the central register, and in the direct alignment of their respective tombs below. As in the 1529 Cranach altarpiece, there is no hint of Mary's role as Ecclesia; she is shown in her historical role at the Annunciation, heralding the age of Grace. The closely paralleled scene on the other side of the composite tree shows Moses receiving the Decalogue and

thereby heralding the age of Law. God only partially emerges from the clouds beneath the dry tree on the left to give Moses the Law engraved on stone, but on the side of the green tree there is a rent in the heavens and the Christ-child streams earthwards at the Annunciation in a burst of light and glory, already bearing his cross. The contrast is between 'the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone' and the glorious 'ministration of the spirit' (II Corinthians 3:7–8). Immediately below Moses on the side of the old dispensation is the Fall and, below it, the tomb of Adam: 'For until the Law sin was in the world [. . .] death doth reign from Adam to Moses' (Romans 5:14).

Adam's tomb and corpse are directly paralleled with the scene of Christ, the second Adam, rising from his tomb and trampling a skeleton underfoot. The studied allusion to themes in Romans 5–8 does not represent an exclusively Lutheran interest, of course, but arises from the late medieval concern with the problem of justification also reflected in the depiction of the Fall in a number of late fifteenth-century manuscripts of St Augustine's *City of God*. St Paul, standing by the fountain of life, symbol of grace, is shown quoting his own words from Romans 5:12, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men'. The *City of God* illustrations show either a skeleton at the foot of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (as on Altdorfer's frontispiece to the Lutheran New Testament) or a cadaverous figure of Death entering the Garden to receive his own (as he does in Furtmeyer's illustration of the composite tree and two Eves in the Salzburg missal of [198] 1481).⁴⁴ Like the Salzburg missal, Altdorfer's woodcut some fifty years later shows an ambiguous figure seated at the foot of the composite tree, suggesting Everyman faced with a choice. In the missal the emphasis is on turning from the fatal fruit of the first Eve to the life-giving bread offered by the second Eve as Ecclesia. In the Lutheran woodcut the choice is differently presented. Everyman's whole body is turned towards the side of the tree of sin and death, but his attention and gaze are being urgently re-directed by two counsellors. In this interior struggle between flesh and spirit (Romans 7:14–8:14) he is guided by the Word of God, defined by Luther as 'the self-revealing action of God whereby the redeeming work of Christ is made known to man'. A.G. Dickens has pointed out that the 'Word of God' was, for Luther, threefold: 'the heard word of preaching; the visible word of the two gospel sacraments; the written word of the Scriptures, seen and interpreted as a whole'.⁴⁵ Biblical history is shown in Altdorfer's frontispiece as the unfolding of the divine plan. It ranges from the Fall to Moses, the Law and the brazen serpent prefiguring the redeeming cross in the old covenant scenes on the left, to the scenes of the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection on the right. At the foot of the composite tree, which bears the title to the New Testament, an Old Testament prophet

44 An example of each type in Chew, *Pilgrimage*, figs. 6, 7.

45 A.G. Dickens, *Reformation and Society in Sixteenth Century Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1966), p. 58.

holds the other part of 'the written word of the Scriptures' and joins the last of the prophets, John the Baptist (suggesting 'the heard word of preaching'), in directing Everyman's gaze to 'the redeeming work of Christ' presented on the right.

The Baptist again points the way to Christ, and to the *Agnus Dei* beneath the crucifixion, its standard allusion to the Eucharist serving in this Lutheran context as one image of 'the visible word of the two gospel sacraments'. The other sacrament, of baptism, is implicit in the scene below the crucifixion where a skeleton is in the act of lying down beside the tomb of Christ, who rises from the grave, piercing the skeleton with the standard of the cross. Everyman is thus being urged to repent, to be crucified with Christ and to die to the old Adam that the body of sin might be destroyed:

Know you not as many of us were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death: Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

(Romans 6:3-4)

Directed by the threefold Word of God, Everyman (and therefore the spectator) is exhorted to turn, by faith, from the sin and death which [199] reign under the Law, to the conquest of sin and death under Grace: 'as by the offence of one, judgement came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life' (Romans 5:18). This turning from the tableau presented on the left of the frontispiece to that on the right aptly illustrates Luther's early description of the life of man as a transition 'from law to grace; from sin to righteousness; from Moses to Christ'. In his commentary *In primum librum Mose enarrationes*, Luther asserted, 'Arbor mortis est lex, arbor vitae est evangelium seu Christus'. As early as 1516 he had set two of his students the exercise of defending the proposition 'Man without grace is a tree that can bring forth no good fruit'. In Altdorfer's image the Fall is interpreted through the eyes of St Paul, as understood at one time by St Augustine, in turn as seen by Luther's circle in the light of late medieval theological preoccupations.

Cruder variants revealed the polarisation of Luther's teaching on the opposition of the flesh and the spirit, the Law and Grace, in terms of his own opposition to Rome. The 'Word of God' was to be set out on Cranach's altarpiece of 1545 in scenes of contemporary Lutheran preaching and the two sacraments illustrating the reign of Grace, contrasted with savagely propagandist scenes vilifying the Roman Church and the rule of Law.⁴⁶ In such a programme the Tree of Life had no organic function and simply disappeared, its purely formal role of dividing the picture area and separating contrasted scenes being readily replaced by a central column of

46 *Der Unterschied zwischen dem Evangelischen und Katholischen Gottendienst* (Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin1), reproduced in Dickens, *Reformation*, pl. 23.

masonry. Already in Altdorfer's sophisticated image of 1533, the central composite tree bearing the great scriptural title-board and accompanied by a subsidiary scene of the crucifixion, departs from the long iconographic tradition of the cosmological Tree of Life, simultaneously evoking Eden, Golgotha and the heavenly paradise, and always to be identified with the sacramental and mystical body of Christ. The radical implications of the composition are obscured by the sheer familiarity of some of its constituent themes and images: the dry tree of the old Adam, the green tree of the new; the Tree of Vices and Tree of Virtues; the fruits of the flesh and spirit; the typological contrast of the old and new covenants; the image of Adam restored to life at the foot of the cross. Moreover, the device of a central tree simultaneously recalling the Fall and the Crucifixion, the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life, continues a long medieval tradition of trying to convey through a single image not only the antithetical nature of the [200] *lignum scientiae* and the *lignum crucis*, but their interrelatedness within the divine plan of human salvation and their continuing relevance to the individual spiritual life. [201]



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